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ABSTRACT

This study explores current education, training, and employment issues and opportunities for rural youth in Australia, and suggests ways in which relevant education, training, and employment options and prospects can be generated for rural youth. Specifically, this study documents the ways that economic and social changes in rural communities have impacted young people; identifies service gaps for young rural people that contribute to or hinder their effective participation in education, employment, and training; examines the adequacy of employment counseling services in local rural economies; identifies barriers to employment, education, and training opportunities for rural youth; documents likely growth industries in rural Australia that are relevant to young women and men; describes innovative models that generate education and training options for rural youth; and explores current and proposed use of information technologies that support education, training, and employment outcomes. Recommendations are made in areas of education, pathways, employment, retention, participation, and specific Indigenous issues. The recommendations reflect the realization that strategies must address individual community demographics, culture, and need. They emphasize the importance of local creativity and partnerships between business, communities, schools, and government in responding to rural issues. Eight appendices present conferences attended, consultation tools, contact details for innovative programs, summary of youth consultation issues and comments, principles that enhance youth participation, and a discussion of youth entrepreneurship education. (Contains 142 references.) (TD)

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NATIONAL YOUTH AFFAIRS RESEARCH SCHEME

Creating better educational and employment opportunities for RURAL YOUNG PEOPLE

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Creating better educational and employment opportunities for rural young people

a report to the

National Youth Affairs Research Scheme

Principal investigators: Peter Kenyon, Howard Sercombe, Alan Black, Dominica Lhuede
Research Associates: Michael O'Meara, Simon White

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Executive summary

This report addresses the education and employment environment for young people in rural and remote Australia. It surveys the literature on rural economic and education issues and overviews a range of government and other inquiries into the state of affairs in "the bush". It reports on a series of consultations across Australia about the issues facing young women and men in country areas. It incorporates a selection of case studies of rural towns which have realised that their future is dependent on the future of their young people. It identifies where the potential for growth lies, and the core criteria that need attention in order to open up opportunities for young people outside the coastal fringe of this continent.

The life of rural and remote communities, and the lives of young men and women, have been subject to fundamental strains over recent decades. Some have prospered in the changing environment of economic restructuring, globalism, and the social and economic transformations that the communications and information revolution has brought about. Others have worn it hard, and have struggled to survive.

Rural Australia has had to adjust to deregulation both of their own industries and of other sectors on which they are highly dependent – particularly the banks. Buffers and protections have been removed. Government and business policy has homed in more narrowly on economic efficiency as the dominant criterion for decision-making, including decisions about what to put where. Rural Australia has become more centralised and regionalised. As a result, many small rural communities face a downward spiral as local offices close, local business moves to the next big town or to the city, more local businesses shut their doors and young people, facing a jobless town, move away. As the economic core of the town falters, its social and educational resources also tend to deteriorate.

Much of this drift has been to capital cities. Most of the rest has been to "sponge cities" – large regional towns where better economies of scale apply – and to the more amenable environments of the coastal fringe.

Young people across Australia have been vulnerable to the impact of economic restructuring, but not more so than in the bush. The collapse of the youth labour market, where many of the jobs that used to be done by young people no longer exist, has hit rural Australia as hard as anywhere else. The youth jobs that have not disappeared have been casualised or made temporary or part time, in the quest for a more flexible, cheaper, ready-made, "just in time" labour force. The growth even in these positions has mostly been in bigger population centres, and young people have followed. Even with the out-migration of young people seeking work, unemployment has been higher among young people in rural Australia than in the city. Young people's involvement in small business has declined, with a more complex business environment and higher start-up costs in many lines of work.

In country areas, these problems have been made worse because access to career information and transition-to-work programs that are available to other young Australians, including job search support. Training programs like apprenticeships and traineeships are difficult to get in places where most businesses employ less than five people and where access to TAFE programs is limited.

Rural young people's vulnerability is accentuated by a global economic environment that is education-hungry. Educational resources are shallower and more thinly spread outside major metropolitan centres, especially in post-compulsory education. It is harder to recruit and to keep experienced and skilled teachers. So young people either content themselves with lower than average levels

of education, or leave home to head for the city where secondary, technical and tertiary opportunities are much richer. Access to education is not the only problem. Housing, transport, communications, leisure and cultural resources follow the same pattern.

All of these forces bite harder for Indigenous young people, who have to deal not only with often greater degrees of remoteness and with an educational curriculum that is culturally and linguistically foreign, but also with entrenched discrimination when they are looking for work. As a result, completion rates in education are a fraction of the average, and unemployment rates are much higher.

Current policy directions indicate that the needs of rural Australia are increasingly being recognised by Federal and State Governments, though consultations indicated some concern in current Federal Government labour market policy and programs. Concerns were raised in particular about the Youth Allowance, especially the impact of farm assets on eligibility, compliance problems with Mutual Obligation requirements, and access problems with the Job Network. Many of these issues have been identified by other reports, and several may have already been addressed by the time this report is published.

Projects such as Networking the Nation, the Telecentre network in Western Australia and its equivalents in other States were identified as the kinds of initiatives that are providing an effective base for further educational and economic development for young people. While information and communications technology should not be seen as a cheap substitute for face-to-face services, there was widespread opinion that the potential of this technology had not yet been fully harnessed. The efforts of all levels of government in supporting community development and consultation with young people were appreciated, and their extension, in cooperation and consultation with local communities, was strongly endorsed.

Several towns have recognised that their futures are caught up in the future of their youth. They have brought together the resources they can muster to engage young people, to see what they can do about what young people need in order to stay. They have worked hard to address important contributing factors like transport, accommodation and cultural opportunities. They have thought hard about how to retain local business and foster the local economy, and how to include young people within that. They have worked out the sorts of things, thinking creatively, that could work in their community, and new industries – such as tourism, bakeries or cheese factories or other "boutique" industries, data processing services and other "telework", and specialist agriculture – have been initiated.

Studies investigating what went right in such cases have identified the following components:

- belief and expectation;
- local commitment and investment;
- use of community economic development methodology;
- presence of healthy community behaviour, e.g. participation, inclusiveness, consensus building;
- local decision-making;
- leadership and its continual renewal (including a focus on young men and women); and
- positive and proactive local institutions including education, local government and media.

On the last point in particular, schools have a critical role to play in the survival of rural communities that goes way beyond the task of teaching children how to read and write. Very often, schools have provided a point of focus, facilitated linkages, established partnerships with industry, and provided coordinating roles for small town revitalisation. Frequently this has been done through the energy and enthusiasm of individual teachers and community members. For an approach less dependent on chance, resources – money and training – will need to be provided to encourage and enable country schools to take on some of these roles.

The report documents the efforts of several such towns and communities, here and overseas. Few of them are rags to riches kinds of stories. Some are exciting stories of profound, accelerating change and high imagination. Most involve small-scale initiatives, often vulnerable to the loss of key people from the project or the loss of external support. Many have yet to significantly engage Indigenous young people. But many towns have begun the process of rebuilding, and the potential for an upward spiral of revitalisation is significant. At least, the fundamental reversal has already happened: that young people are seen as the key to the town's future, and are correspondingly valued, honoured and included.

Much remains to be done. While communities themselves must do the driving, there is a major role for governments to play in priming the rejuvenation process, and in providing key supports to encourage, maintain and extend it. This report makes a series of recommendations about ways in which this could be done, and the case studies provide a set of successful examples. There seems to be a growing consensus on the principles, and these are documented in the report. Together, they point to a healthy future for rural communities in Australia.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The former Youth Ministers Council, now known as the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), established the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme (NYARS) in 1985. The scheme is a cooperative arrangement between the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments and seeks to contribute to the formation and assessment of youth policy and its implementation. Individual studies are commissioned by NYARS to give information on subjects not adequately covered by existing data sources and surveys.

The life chances of rural and remote young people in Australia were and continue to be the subject of some concern in Australian political life. In 1999, NYARS commissioned the Centre for Social Research and I.D.E.A.S. (Initiatives for the Development of Enterprising Action and Strategies, and incorporating the Centre for Small Town Development) to undertake a national study into the education and employment needs of young women and men in rural Australia in order to make a contribution to the debates.

This study explores the current education, training and employment issues and opportunities for rural young women and men, and suggests ways in which relevant education, training and employment options and prospects can be generated for young people living in rural areas. The study's report also provides insights and recommendations regarding other key issues affecting the retention of young men and women within rural Australia.

Specifically, this study:

- documents the way economic and social changes in rural communities have impacted upon young men and women and their education, training and employment opportunities, and influenced their attitudes to living and working within rural Australia;
- maps existing relevant programs, and identifies service gaps for young people living in rural areas that contribute to and/or hinder their effective participation in education, employment and training;
- examines the adequacy of employment and career guidance and counselling services as they relate to education, training and employment opportunities in local rural economies;
- identifies barriers to employment and relevant education and training opportunities for young people in rural communities;
- documents likely growth industries applicable to rural Australia that are of relevance to young women and men;
- describes innovative models that can be developed to generate education and training options for young people in rural areas that are compatible with their employment opportunities and lifestyle aspirations; and
- explores current and proposed use of information technology, and describes approaches to enhancing rural young people's use of such technologies that support education, training and employment outcomes.

This report presents the experiences and documents the voices of rural youth, their parents, teachers and local community agencies on issues related to education,

employment and training in rural and remote locations. Combining these experiences with input from local, State and Federal Government policy-makers, service managers, youth development practitioners and rural researchers, this report examines the current status of the educational, employment and training needs of young people in rural Australia.

It is indicative of the level of concern about the fortunes of these young people that a number of other reports and information-gathering exercises have been conducted concurrently by various bodies, notably MCEETYA itself and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission. In several cases, the issues identified in this report, having been identified through a range of such exercises, have already been the subject of government action. Data collection for the report was complete by the beginning of 2000, and there have been various publications that have become available since then, as well as recent policy developments, which may not have been referred to in these pages. In a rapidly-changing environment, some of our recommendations may no longer be current by the time this report goes to press, and the existence of a recommendation is not meant to imply that nothing is being done. At the same time, it is clear that a lot of work remains to be done before small towns in remote Australia can breathe easily.

1.1 Defining rural Australia

The concepts of rural, remote, non-metropolitan and the "outback" have specific meanings in the Australian context, which often differ from those used in other countries.

Due to differing definitions adopted in member countries, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has proposed a working definition, based on the primary criterion of population density: rural areas have no more than 150 inhabitants per square kilometre (Dax 1996). Once communities have been categorised into rural and urban on the basis of population density, regions that might include both rural and urban communities can be classified into the following three types:

- predominantly rural regions, where more than 50 per cent of the population lives in rural communities;
- significantly rural regions, where the proportion of the population in rural communities is 15–50 per cent;
- predominantly urbanised regions, where less than 15 per cent of the population is in rural communities.

In Australia, several Federal Government departments use the following operational definitions of these concepts:

- Metropolitan refers to capital cities, consisting of State and Territory capital city Statistical Divisions (SDs) with a population of 100,000 or more. Currently, this includes the urban centres of Canberra–Queanbeyan, Geelong, Gold Coast–Tweed Heads, Newcastle, Townsville and Wollongong.
- Rural applies to areas outside of metropolitan cities and including cities with fewer than 100,000 residents.
- Remoteness is conceptualised in terms of those areas where there is a low population density and long distances to large populations.
- Non-metropolitan refers to both the classifications of "remote" and "rural" as defined above. Furthermore, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) have established two subcategories under the term "Non-Metropolitan Zone" being "Rural Zone" and "Remote Zone":
  - A Remote Zone contains two additional subdivisions being a Remote Centre with 5,000 or more residents, and an Other Remote Area with a population of less than 5,000.
  - A Rural Zone contain three subdivisions: A Large Rural Centre, with a population from 25,000 to 99,999; a Small Rural Centre, with a population from 10,000 to 24,999; and an Other Rural Centre, with less than 10,000 residents.

Rural Australia also contains territory that is among the planet's most vast and sparsely settled areas. This remote area is often described as the "outback" and embraces a region of about three million square kilometres. It is home to only 184,000 people – about one per cent of the Australian population. Importantly, much of the population of outback Australia is concentrated in just six "big" towns: Kalgoorlie, the largest town in outback Australia with close to 32,000 people, Alice Springs, Broken Hill, Mt Isa, Katherine and Tennant Creek. The remaining 68,700 people are scattered across native and grazing lands and in smaller settlements such as Longreach or Wiluna (Salt 1999). On a world scale, Salt has compared outback Australia with Greenland, with a population of 55,000 over two million square kilometres; the African Sahara with 2.4 million in population spread across eight million square kilometres; and Antarctica's 4,000 people across 14 million square kilometres. Despite

this comparison with some of the world's harshest environments, outback Australia remains in many respects the heartland of the continent and of the nation. After all, it contains much of the country's mineral wealth, heritage, national icons and a culture that is uniquely "Australian".

So rural Australia, by definition, is diverse. It includes not only farming areas and agricultural and pastoral service centre areas, but also mining towns, coastal resorts that attract holiday-makers and retirees, remote Aboriginal communities and stations, isolated islands, alternative communities, wilderness and desert areas, and many of the nation's major regional centres.

In this report, the term "rural" refers to all areas outside of metropolitan settlements. Thus, a rural area can contain isolated settlements, small towns of up to 9,999 residents, small rural centres with a resident population ranging from 10,000 to 24,999, and regional centres with a resident population ranging from 25,000 to 99,999. The term outback is used synonymously with remote to refer to those isolated settlements and towns that are more remote than rural areas. Any settlement with 100,000 or more residents is metropolitan for the purposes of this report.

1.2 Defining "youth"

Most government agencies in Australia, and in many other countries, define youth by the administratively useful working notion that youth is the age cluster of 12- to 25-year-olds. Many sources will also understand youth as a period of transition that involves the gradual increase in independence until the roles and responsibilities of adulthood are fully taken on.

However, as a social category, "youth" is not as clear-cut as the above statements seem to indicate. In a society characterised by both the rapid development and the obsolescence of various forms of technology, by economic transformations, and by societal and familial changes, the concept of a straightforward, linear transition from childhood to adulthood, and the corresponding transition from dependence to independence with all of its rewards, is looking increasingly obsolete.

In the current environment, young men and women are more likely to move between school, home, full-time work, part-time work, living with boy/girl-friends, back to study, back home. Most of the statuses that once guaranteed a young person's accreditation within adult society – marriage, full-time and permanent employment, leaving home, setting up a home, parenthood – are now not seen as available or are temporary, unreliable, transitory or not really conferring an adult status. For young people today, there no longer appears to be a clear and reliable transitional pathway to adulthood. Rather, it is a state that emerges vaguely and unevenly across a number of differing contexts and experiences.

Some young people are partnered and independent while others are at school and still wholly dependent on family. As whole individuals they embrace social roles in the context of being students, friends, partners or workers (Goodwin 1998).

"Youth" is also a movement towards a sense of rightful place and power within their communities. Young people strive for this in the context of society's persistent fears of young people's capacity for violence, crime and delinquency, and the belief and judgement that young people are "too young" and "too unsafe" to be given access to adult processes.

"Youth" is therefore also a category of exclusion. Once puberty has settled down – usually by the age of about 15 – young people are biologically adult. Any decision to exclude them from participation in community life is then a social decision, and could be otherwise. It is these processes of exclusion that create a "youth" category (Sercombe 1996, p.133).

We believe that before some people make judgements on the youth of today, they should make an effort to get to know us a little better(High school student cited in *Youth Voice Western Australia*, Office of Youth Affairs 1999).

Stereotyped perceptions of young people impact on their ability, and sometimes desire, to participate and achieve in society despite the fact that these views are often not accurate and provide no indication of the true contribution made by young people. Young people, as a specific population group, are as diverse as our total society. The issues impacting on them are equally diverse.

1.3 Research methodology

There are eight main components of the research methodology involved in the production of this report:

- literature review;
- review of, and attendance and participation at, a series of national and regional inquiries and key stakeholder conferences;
- review of current services and programs;
- structured consultations held within a range of rural communities;
- interviews with key individuals and groups who work in and service rural Australia;

- State consultation meetings involving individuals from a range of organisations involved with youth, employment, training and rural sectors;
- identification of potential growth industries for rural areas; and
- identification and analysis of innovative education, training and employment projects.

A key aspect associated with several of these tasks (listed above) was the undertaking of extensive interviews with young women and men and other key stakeholders at a local, State and Federal level.

1.3.1 Review of literature

A literature review, drawn from a wide range of sources, was undertaken, with particular reference to the situation and needs of youth in rural and regional areas. The review included recent relevant research and data on:

- population and economic trends in rural and regional Australia;
- the causes and consequences of rural decline;
- the factors affecting the retention of young people in, and the attraction of young people to, rural communities;
- the factors affecting participation by young people from rural and regional Australia in education, training and employment, including issues of access and equity as related to race, gender, disability, class and geographic location;
- the impacts of the movement of young people from rural and regional locations to large regional and metropolitan centres for the purpose of undertaking education or training or gaining employment;
- employment creation, innovation and revitalisation in rural and regional communities, especially developments involving, and providing opportunities for, young people; and
- the potential for information technology to enhance the opportunities for young people to engage in education, training and employment in rural and regional areas.

1.3.2 Review of national and regional inquiries and participation in stakeholder conferences

The report draws and builds on information and research presented at national, State and regional inquiries and conferences, for example:

- Youth Affairs Conference, Pinjarra, WA (May 1999);
- Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) Outback Revival Conference, Longreach, Queensland (August 1999);
- Isolated Children's Parents Association National Conference, Katherine, NT (September 1999);
- *Jobs for the Regions*, Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee Report (September 1999);
- Australian Rural Summit, Canberra (October 1999);
- Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia (SPERA) National Conference, Kalgoorlie, WA (October 1999);
- Community Economic Development Institute Conference, Boonah, Qld (November 1999);
- *Rural and Remote School Education: A survey for the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission*, (Stokes, Stafford & Holdsworth 1999);
- *Bush Talks*, (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) March 1999); and
- National Association of Agricultural Educators, Biennial Conference – Education for Rural Revival (January 2000).

[A complete list of conferences attended and contributed to, and key national, State and regional reports is presented in Appendix 1.]

A secondary outcome of attendance and/or presentation at key national, regional and stakeholder conferences and inquiries, and an unsought outcome for this report, has been the strong network links that have been generated nationally.

1.3.3 Review of current services and programs

Current Commonwealth, State and local government policies were reviewed to determine how policy and program approaches affect young women and men in rural areas. Particular attention was given to mainstream programs providing education, training and employment-related services in rural areas, including the impact of the introduction of the Youth Allowance and the restructuring and privatisation of the former Commonwealth Employment Service. The capacity of the existing services to connect to local economies and to provide for the particular needs of young people was also examined.

While this report does not try to evaluate the effectiveness or impact of each of these programs and recent changes to service provision, it did seek to identify critical gaps in education, training and employment-related services. The report also seeks to identify the barriers that young people face in gaining access to

services that are nominally available. It should be noted that stakeholder consultations were undertaken prior to the second Job Network tender round in which critical changes were made to the delivery of services, including a greater focus on rural and regional Australia.

Data for this task were drawn from policy and program documents and from interviews with knowledgable informants within the public service and the non-government sector. Further information was gained from specific case studies within the communities of Warrnambool, Moree and Whyalla, generated by the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (1999) Youth Pathways Taskforce, and through the facilitation of two regional consultations in the Wide Bay and Burnett regions of Queensland on behalf of the Youth Pathways Taskforce (February 2000).

It is important to recognise that employment, education and training issues for rural and remote young people have emerged as an area for urgent government action over the past two or three years. Indeed, this report is itself part of a broad movement of concern by a range of authorities, both within government and outside it. In such a rapidly changing environment, it is inevitable that governments are already active in areas which the report identifies as needing intervention, and that any survey of government programs will already be overtaken by change before the report goes to print. The report has not been able to incorporate any changes or new initiatives implemented since April 2000. The identification of a gap in policy or program provision should not be taken to imply that it is an area in which authorities are inactive, and the gap may indeed already have been covered between the time that data were collected and the publication of the report.

1.3.4 Structured consultations with a range of rural communities

Ten rural communities across four States (Western Australia, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia) were selected for study and consultation. The communities cover a diverse range of geographic locations, economic bases, degrees of growth or decline, and extent of community effort to address issues of education, training and employment for young people.

The communities involved in consultations for this report were chosen on the basis of specific demographic and geographic factors, as well as their demonstrated capacity to be innovative and enterprising in relation to business retention and creation, population retention and enhancing community participation and spirit. These latter factors will be discussed further in Chapter 2. Below is a brief summary of selected communities:

Rural communities located in coastal strips or closely settled areas that may not be declining in population and/or economic activity – Dongara, WA; Bridgetown, WA; Boonah, Qld.

- Dongara is located along the north-west coast of Western Australia, in the Shire of Irwin, approximately 390 kilometres from Perth. Although a growing coastal community with strong tourism and fishing industry sectors, Dongara has experienced a 66 per cent decrease in its youth population (aged 15 to 24 years) in the 1986–96 period (ABS 1996b; ABS 1996g). Dongara has a strong community and business development focus, and has piloted a number of innovative community and educational programs.
- Bridgetown is located in the south-west of Western Australia, approximately 280 kilometres from Perth. Bridgetown has experienced a 15 per cent decrease in its youth population in the 10 years to 1996 (ABS 1996b; ABS 1996g). Bridgetown, and in particular the education sector within Bridgetown, has been innovative in projects involving local young people.
- Boonah is located one hours travel distance south-west of Brisbane. Boonah has experienced a 26.5 per cent increase in total unemployment in the 10 years to 1996, and a 14 per cent decrease in its youth population in the same period (ABS 1996c; ABS 1996g). Boonah has recently developed a national reputation for innovative community and economic development initiatives.

Traditional inland agricultural communities – Hyden, WA; Blackall, Qld; Bourke, NSW; Benalla, Vic; Wundinna, SA.

- Hyden, located in the Shire of Kondinin, is 370 kilometres south-east of Perth. Primarily a farming and agricultural area, Hyden has also capitalised on the tourism potential of the local environment. In the 10-year period to 1996, Hyden experienced a 74 per cent decrease in its youth population (ABS 1996b; ABS 1996g). Subsequently, Hyden has developed a national reputation for innovative community development initiatives in business, tourism and youth retention.
- Blackall is located approximately 940 kilometres north-west of Brisbane. A traditional agricultural community, Blackall has experienced a 37 per cent decrease in its youth population and a corresponding decrease in the number of young people

attending secondary schooling in the area (ABS 1996c; ABS 1996g). Blackall was the first inland town to pilot a youth-focused Internet café service.

- Bourke is located in the north-west of New South Wales, 770 kilometres from Sydney, and 159 kilometres north of Cobar. Bourke has experienced a 66 per cent decrease in its youth population in the period 1986–96. Bourke has a significant Indigenous population, accounting for 33.8 per cent of the population in the region. The unemployment rate of 15- to 19-year-olds was 30.4 per cent in 1996, while the rate for 20- to 25-year-olds was 10.8 per cent (ABS 1996d; ABS 1996g). Over the past two years, Bourke, through Council and community initiatives, has piloted a number of youth employment initiatives, especially targeting young Indigenous people. Consultations in Bourke particularly focused on the issues and challenges facing young Indigenous residents.
- Benalla, in the Shire of Delatite, is located in the north-central region of Victoria, approximately 250 kilometres from Melbourne. It is located close to the ski field regions of Victoria. Delatite as a region has only suffered a minor decrease of 7 per cent in its youth population between 1986 and 1996 while the adult population has increased by 13 per cent (ABS 1996e; ABS 1996g). Delatite has a national and international reputation for its innovative youth employment international exchange program that has proactively addressed youth retention and employment and training issues within the local community.
- Wundinna is located in the Eyre Peninsula, approximately 550 kilometres from Adelaide. Wundinna, an argriculture-based town, has seen a 47 per cent decrease in it youth population (aged 15 to 24 years) during the period 1986–96. This is similarly reflected in decreases in young people attending schooling and actively participating and looking for employment in the region (ABS 1996f; ABS 1996g). Wundinna, through Council and community actions is exploring a number of community-building initiatives including some in the area of telecommunications.

Remote regional or mining communities – Leigh Creek, SA; Cobar, NSW

- Leigh Creek is a mining community located on the eastern side of Lake Torrens, bounded by the Flinders Ranges, and approximately 620 kilometres from Adelaide. From a peak population of 2500 in the mid-1980s, the number of residents in Leigh Creek had fallen to under 600 in 1999. Leigh Creek experienced a 59 per cent decrease in the number of young people in the 1986–96 period (ABS 1996f; ABS 1996g). The Leigh Creek community has proactively addressed this crisis through community and business partnerships and the creative involvement of their young people in terms of tourism opportunities.
- Cobar, New South Wales is a mining community located 159 kilometres south of Bourke, and approximately 700 kilometres from Sydney. Cobar has experienced a dramatic reduction of 67 per cent of its youth population during the 10-year period to 1996 (ABS 1996d; ABS 1996g). Cobar is a community in transition, given the significant decline in its traditional gold mining focus.

Consultations with the above communities included the following activities:

- interviews with key informants such as local government officials, school and TAFE teachers, youth workers, clergy, representatives of social welfare organisations, and regional employment officials;
- focus groups with young men and women;
- focus groups with youth-related stakeholders including parents and workers with youth; and
- gathering of information on key youth initiatives.

From the above, the following were assessed:

- key issues and priority actions related to the retention of young women and men within communities;
- the effectiveness of mainstream education, training and employment-related agencies in delivering services to young people;
- the forms and outcomes of any local initiatives to address these issues;
- the situation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people in relation to education, training, employment and other community services; and
- the complementary areas of development (such as housing and recreational facilities) that are required to meet the needs of youth in these communities.

A copy of the consultation discussion tool is included as Appendix 2.

In addition, the outcomes of consultations with young people in Geraldton (WA), Albany (WA), Barcaldine, Longreach, and the Wide Bay and Burnett regions of

Queensland were used. Consultations with over 300 young people from the Eyre Peninsula region of South Australia, in particular the towns of Cowell, Cleve, Ellison, Streaky Bay and Ceduna, further informed the issues documented in this report.

1.3.5 Interviews with key individuals and groups who work in and serve rural Australia

A large number of face-to-face and telephone interviews have been undertaken with key individuals including Chris Sidoti, Human Rights Commissioner; Mark Weir, Coordinator, Priority Country Areas Program, Central Region, Qld; and David Turner, International Consultant on Enterprise Education. A number of groups and networks have also been consulted, including the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council of Western Australia. In addition, in-depth discussions were held with Dr Ed Nelson (1999 Australian–American Educational Foundation Fellow on Rural Education) and Jerry Hoffman (Coordinator, School at the Centre Project, Nebraska, USA). Dr Nelson and Mr Hoffman were involved in an extensive rural education workshop study tour in Australia in 1999 sponsored by the Australian–American Educational Foundation.

1.3.6 State consultation meetings

A structured consultation session was held in each State, and the Northern Territory, with personnel from relevant State and Commonwealth departments, non-government organisations and other agencies involved with the provision of youth employment, training and redevelopment services. A copy of the consultation discussion tool is included as Appendix 3.

1.3.7 Identification of potential growth industries for rural areas

Building on the information gathered in the previous tasks, and drawing together information and knowledge of developments in rural Australia and other countries (e.g. New Zealand and the United States), a survey and analysis of potential growth industries for rural areas was undertaken. These included:

- tourism, including ecotourism and lifestyle tourism;
- diversification and value adding in primary production;
- "boutique" or "niche" industries, such as various arts and crafts, fine furniture production and boutique bakeries;
- telecentres and other industries based on information technologies; and
- other forms of self-employment and enterprise.

In this analysis, particular attention was given to the conditions required for potential to be achieved, and to the part that youth initiative, education and training can play in broadening the base of local economies and sustainable development.

1.3.8 Identification and analysis of innovative rural employment, training and employment projects

A wide range of initiatives designed to enhance education, training and employment options for young people in rural and regional communities was identified and assessed, both in terms of their outcomes and lessons to be learnt. These were selected from communities where structured consultations occurred, as well as communities recognised nationally as having pioneered and developed an innovative approach. In addition, a range of projects from USA, Britain and New Zealand were included.

1.4 Limitations

The research methodology, while drawing on statistical and other published quantitative data, is not, and was not designed to be, a quantitative survey. While policy-makers may find difficulty with responses that are not presented in terms of frequency, the methodology agreed to with the NYARS Steering Committee was not competent to deliver measures of how universal a particular opinion or response was, and was never designed to be that kind of tool. Focus groups are not amenable to an approach which says that 15 per cent of people said this and 34 per cent of people said that. Not that it is impossible to do that in a focus group, but it is just the wrong tool for the job. Large-scale questionnaires, involving careful sampling procedures, would have been required to deliver that outcome, (or at least in a way that had any meaning and validity) rather than the focus group/interview process agreed upon.

The strength of the consultative methodology is that it is able to identify and aggregate a broad spectrum of opinion and experience, and allows participants to speak rather than merely respond to pre-designed questions. Some of the things they say, for example their criticisms of unemployment programs of various kinds, may not be representative of the situation across rural and remote communities, or even of the breadth of experience in their own community. They may contradict data collected in

other ways. Their understanding of the working of various policies and programs may be erroneous, and their analysis of causal factors may be flawed. However, they do raise issues that can then be tested by quantitative methodologies in order to determine how widespread a problem or phenomenon is. This research is, of course, outside the brief of this report. Outcomes of the consultations should therefore be seen as indicative of the situation in rural and remote communities, rather than definitive. It is a report on what members of rural and remote communities are saying about the situation in their towns, about perception, experience, and local knowledge. The participants are not social scientists. Notwithstanding this, they have intelligence on these matters which should still be listened to closely.

1.5 Data analysis and presentation

This report presents the thoughts and opinions of young people and key stakeholders from 10 Australian rural communities. The data from these consultations have been analysed and synthesised, and collated under key themes addressing the retention of young people in rural areas, education, training and employment issues. Specific issues for Indigenous young men and women were identified. Across communities, there was a high level of consistency in the comments, and broad agreement on key issues. These themes are presented in Chapter 3 of this report. This data are also supported by comments from key stakeholders within each State as well as by an extensive review of current literature, research and policy review.

This report does not provide case by case presentation of the discourse of individual communities. Indeed, the high level of agreement between different communities was such that individual case reviews would only have provided a repetition of themes and issues. What separates and identifies the individual communities is how they have tackled the issues that have been identified.

CHAPTER 2

Transitions in rural Australia

Rural Australia has changed over the past century. This change has been influenced by: shifts in the public and private demand for land and resources, technological advancement, environmental concerns and the transformation of national and international economic systems. This chapter is concerned with the factors that have contributed to change in rural Australia, especially those affecting the educational, training and employment opportunities for young women and men.

2.1 Structural forces in rural Australia

Australia's population is highly urbanised. In 1996, 63 per cent of all Australians lived in major urban centres, that is, towns and cities with populations of 100,000 people or more, while 30 per cent of the population lived in non-metropolitan areas (ABS 1996a). In 1994, McKinsey & Company (p.13) found that one-third of Australia's non-metropolitan population lived in regions that were growing significantly faster than cities. In comparison, 12 per cent lived in areas where the population was contracting. Mostly, these areas were declining mining centres and small rural towns that were losing their residents to larger nearby rural centres.

There are seven local government areas in Australia, each with a greater population base than the whole of outback Australia. Yet the outback covers over one-third of the continent. The contribution the outback makes to the Australian economy far outweighs the one per cent of the national population that actually lives in these locations. Similarly, the contribution that the outback and its people make to our national identify and culture is disproportionately large (Salt 1999).

Sorensen and Epps (1993, pp.7–31) suggest that changes in rural Australia over the past 20 years could be entitled the "age of transition"; transitions from "the status of protected dependent to independent global citizen". They describe a number of major social and economic events that have contributed to this transition in the past two decades. These have included:

- the primacy of economic efficiency as the dominant focus of government policy;
- a greater concern for the protection of the environment;
- a reduction in industry protection. For a short period of time, certain industries (e.g. textiles, clothing and footwear) were attracted to rural towns because they offered cheaper operating sites. The reduction in industry protection also required export-oriented agriculture production to become more efficient and responsive to international demands; and
- the deregulation of the farming sector through, for example, the dismantling or restructuring of industry marketing boards and authorities. This has resulted in the existing security net for many agricultural producers being removed, with the smaller

Human Rights Commissioner, Chris Sidoti, last year conducted Bush Talks, visiting a large number of rural and remote areas. He found people there generally came off second best ... distance, isolation, lower incomes and minority status all exacerbate the experience of discrimination, harassment and lack of services and participation. (Wahlquist 1999)

farmers becoming more vulnerable through more direct exposure to fluctuations in commodity demand and prices.

These factors are explored in the recent Senate References Committee inquiry into regional employment and unemployment (Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee 1999, p.16), which suggests that industry and economic trends lead to a downward spiral for rural communities involving:

- an erosion of the economic base as key industries wind down, or company restructuring forces the closure of a branch plant;
- a closure of support industries;
- a loss of local income, which puts pressure on local small business, some of which may also close;
- a reduction in employment prospects, which sees school leavers and mobile skilled workers moving to metropolitan regions for further education and training or to other regions where their skills are in demand;
- a decline in population, which leads to the withdrawal of some State and Commonwealth government offices and services;
- a fall in school numbers, which results in professionally qualified (and higher paid) people leaving;
- a fall in housing prices, which reduces options for some people with portable skills who stay and accept unemployment benefits; and
- a fall in local rates receipts, which may result in a reduction in services. (McKinsey & Company 1994, cited in Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee 1999, pp.17–18).

This cycle of decline can be even more prominent in communities dependent on a single industry sector such as mining or traditional agriculture. Change, however, has not been constant or universal. Hugo (1994, p.11) found, in his analysis of change in Australia's non-metropolitan regions, that:

> *there is a growing and widening dichotomisation occurring in non-metropolitan Australia. The wheat–sheep belt areas are generally experiencing the rural depopulation, dominated by school leavers that characterised the early post-war years. However, there are substantial areas in the better-watered and more accessible parts of non-metropolitan Australia which are continuing to experience significant and sustained net in-migration and population growth. Hence, population change in non-metropolitan Australia is becoming, and is likely to become even more, diverse and perhaps much less predictable in the 1990s.*

The analysis of investment patterns in rural Australia by McKinsey & Company (1994) has categorised non-metropolitan regions into four types:

1) regions that are growing significantly faster than their capital city, like Mandurah in Western Australia;
2) regions growing at the same rate as their capital city, like Geelong in Victoria;
3) regions that are experiencing steady growth but growth that is slower than their capital city, like Renmark in South Australia; and
4) regions in which communities are in absolute decline in terms of employment, like Hay in New South Wales.

While this report is concerned with the situation of young women and men in all rural contexts, including the four types described by McKinsey & Company, emphasis is given to those rural communities experiencing slow growth or absolute decline.

Salt (1999) describes two important trends. First, the trend for "sponge regional centres" to absorb the declining population of their hinterlands. This trend appears to be most prevalent in the wheat and sheep belt areas of Australia, where economic and trade changes are difficult to absorb and hence lead to aggregation of farms and population decline (Productivity Commission 1999).

What is happening in these towns is that young people ... with any talent finish school and leave. Entrepreneurs with any talent move out ... there is substantial asset deflation in these areas (submission by Prof Rolf Gerritson to Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee 1999).

The "sponge city" process is perhaps clearest in the margins of rural areas in the north-west of New South Wales. The population of a regional centre such as Dubbo (NSW) has increased by 55 per cent to 37,030 in the 22 years to 1998. At the same time, the number of people living

In the town of Narrandera (NSW), 75 km west of "sponge city" Wagga, there has been a 10 per cent reduction in the population base in the 20 years to 1996. This includes a 33 per cent reduction in the number of 15- to 19-year-olds. This represents a one-third reduction in the number of Narrandera teenagers since 1976.

in rural settings to the north and north-west of Dubbo has declined by eight per cent. A community like Cootamundra experienced a 12 per cent population decline.

Factors underlying the "sponge city" trend include:

- the direct migration of families who, having sold their land, move to the nearest regional city to retire or find work, while retaining family and social connections; and
- the concentration of banking government and other services such as health and education, and the construction of major conglomerate shopping centres in the regional centres, which directly supports employment growth in these centres at the expense of small-town business and small-community population decline.

Thirty-one per cent of towns with between 1,000–20,000 people that have declining populations are inland towns. One-third of these towns experienced a decline of at least 10 per cent. These towns are mostly service towns for nearby dry land grazing or grain industries (Productivity Commission 1999).

Micro-economic reform that has been underpinning policy development at all levels of government in Australia, has had a huge impact on rural communities. As governments seek to use their resources more efficiently they cut costs by closing services such as schools and hospitals which are deemed unviable as they do not have enough students or clients to justify their existence in monetary terms. This becomes a vicious cycle as rural populations are declining, which results in the closure of services, which in turn makes it difficult to attract new population (Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission 1998, p.15).

The second major trend is the "coastal drift" or the "clamour for the coast" (Salt 1999) which describes the growth of population in major regional coastal towns. Of the 10 fastest growing municipalities, nine were coastal, growing at three times the national average between 1976 and 1996. The major growth areas are predominantly on the eastern seaboard and in the south-west of Western Australia, while the major municipalities experiencing decreasing populations were mainly inland centres (Productivity Commission 1999).

The impact of the coastal drift and sponge city trends is evident in the demographic erosion of the economy and society of these towns. Successive governments, with the aim of achieving cost restraint and reduction, and efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery, have introduced micro-economic reforms through the rationalisation and centralisation of services in the sectors of transport, communications and infrastructure, taxation and industrial relations.

In Western Australia, 45 shires across the State have no direct access to a bank branch. The combined population of those shires is over 89,000 (Regional Financial Services Taskforce, Western Australia 1997, p.5).

Government must acknowledge the fact that people live in rural communities and need to be recognised as being part of society rather than part of an economy (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1999, p.19).

Rural Australia has, in the past decade, watched the availability and quality of key services decline. Rural towns have witnessed the centralisation of health, financial and educational facilities, both government and non-government, into major regional centres (e.g. HREOC 1999; Garnett & Lewis 1999; Harrison 1997). Garnett and Lewis (1999, p.12) suggest that "this decline in the availability and/or quality of health, education and financial services has contributed to the movement of people from smaller rural locations to the larger cities".

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission study, *Bush Talk*s, has heard from country towns (and larger centres as well) that are progressively losing key services and critical subsidies. The infrastructure and community of many rural, regional and remote towns have been slowly pared away. In Port Augusta, South Australia, this phenomenon was described to Bush Talks as "the dying town syndrome". Further declines in population, incomes, services and quality of life result. Remote and isolated communities are still waiting for the basic means of survival and well-being.

The decline in rural services is not only found in the public sector. There has also been a marked decline observed in private sector services, particularly those relating to banking and business services. "Downsizing by banks and other financial institutions", says the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission, "has led to the closure of over 400 bank branches between 1991 and 1996 nationwide. Non-metropolitan areas have borne a disproportionate share of this reduction in access to bank branches. Over the same period, the profits of the major banks increased, with the National Australia Bank's profit increasing from $500 million in 1991 to $2 billion in 1996" (Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission 1998, p.36). Reserve Bank figures show that bank and

agency closures are continuing. Nationwide, branch numbers dropped by 1,150 (12%) between 1996 and 1999 and agencies fell by 422 (6%) – the vast majority from rural areas (*West Australian* 5/1/00). From 1993 to 1998, 481 non-metropolitan bank branches shut, with the loss of about 10,000 jobs.

Asa Wahlquist, in an article for *The Weekend Australian* in September 1998, suggests that when a bank closes, "it costs the community an estimated $350 per person per month as people transfer their shopping to their banking town". This scenario is further supported in a report published by the National Farmers' Federation, which argues that

> *When bank branches close, people in rural communities have to travel greater distances to access back services and deal with the inconvenience and added costs involved. When people travel to larger centres they also conduct other business there, reducing the viability of local businesses and other service providers. The loss of jobs can result in the out-migration of households and the loss of business and participants in community organisations. These economic and social effects place the sustainability of rural communities at risk* (Harrison 1997, p.xiv).

Rural communities, of course, vary a great deal. Terms such as "the bush" may reflect a particular set of characteristics and qualities of rural life, but the substance and influences on people in rural areas are far from universal. This diversity makes it difficult to generalise about common factors that have lead directly to the decline of rural communities. Many non-metropolitan communities have grown and prospered over the past few decades. However, even these have had to face problems and challenges in relation to the education, employment and training opportunities available within them.

Sorensen and Epps (1993) describe four interconnected policy arenas that influence the well-being of rural settlements:

- the preservation and enhancement of the environment;
- the development of export-oriented businesses in small towns or their hinterlands;
- improvements in business management; and
- the efficient delivery of public services.

These are affected by all three levels of government (local, State and Federal) as well as by the international context in which Australia and its rural communities live and work.

National Economics (1999, p.5) provides the following summary of the issues described above:

> *Evidence points to increasing divergence in the performance of Australian regions. The increasing employment and income disparities between regions have intensified. The high skilled, high-income areas around the dynamic global cities have virtually returned to full employment. Property prices are high, per capita incomes and wealth have increased, and a high proportion of the work force are in high paid jobs. They enjoy outstanding educational, entertainment and cultural amenities and are sought after by people who can afford to live there. Most inner metropolitan regions have shared in the boom of the 1990s, with the possible exceptions of Adelaide and Hobart. Older traditional production and many rural regions, on the other hand, are caught in low income, low job growth development paths.*

2.2 The youth labour market: broad trends

As well as the tensions that are specific to their context, rural young people have to deal with the universal challenges that face all young people, such as the national and international trends in the economy and labour market. They include the changes brought about by globalisation, service rationalisation and centralisation; the lack of protected markets; knowledge intensity and utilisation; information technology; rapid and continuous change; and increased pressure on businesses and industries to maintain and increase competitiveness.

In 1996, one-third of primary and secondary students studied in the country. On average they did not perform as well as the city students, with only 17 per cent attending tertiary schooling (Sidoti 2000, p.10).

Over the past 20 years, the policies and foundations upon which employment, education and training programs have been designed have changed dramatically. Fundamentally, the labour market is radically different for young men and women today.

The International Labour Organisation estimates that internationally there are about 60 million young people between the ages of 15 and 24 who are in search of work ... with few exceptions, youth unemployment is in double digits although many OECD countries have made some progress (International Labour Organisation (ILO) 1998).

Unemployment is a significant rural issue. Despite improving national employment trends (with State and

metropolitan figures generally dropping below 7%), and the fact that employment growth for 15- to 24-year-olds has been stronger in non-metropolitan than metropolitan Australia, rural Australia continues to provides some remaining jobless hot spots. For example, 1999 ABS figures show that the unemployment rate in the Mersey–Lyell region of north-west Tasmania is 13 per cent, in the Wide Bay–Burnett area of central Queensland it is 11.4 per cent and Gippsland in Victoria it is 10.4 per cent.

Forty per cent of all unemployed Australians are under the age of 24 years, that is, two in every five unemployed people is a young person (Spierings 1998).

Unemployment is also a significant youth issue. In December 1998, the unemployment rate for 15- to 19-year-olds looking for full-time work was 26.5 per cent, compared to 7.9 per cent for all persons (ABS 1999). The problems of youth unemployment are further exacerbated in rural and remote regions.

Australia's Youth: Reality and risk (cited in Spierings 1998) graphically illustrates the key disadvantages faced by this group of young Australians. This report found that 40 per cent of all unemployed Australians are aged 24 years or less. Between 1978 and 1997, there was a decline of total employment held by workers in both the youngest age groups (15 to 19 and 20 to 24 years).

Decreases in the full-time employment participation rate for teenagers "are primarily due to shortages in full-time jobs rather than by teenagers refusing to accept full-time jobs because they wish to attend school longer" (Gregory 1995, cited in Lewis & McLean 1999, p.4).

The decline in numbers of young people in the work force can be partly explained by the increase in their rate of participation in education and mixing part-time work with study.

The current high levels of youth unemployment, however, have not been caused by a growth in the numbers of young men and women seeking work. In reality, the teenage labour force (those employed and those looking for employment) has decreased by 15 per cent over the past 20 years, due in the main to the increase in retention in education. During this same period the overall labour force grew by 44 per cent.

High youth unemployment has been at least partly caused by a reduced demand by the labour market for young people. Over the past 10 years, the number of full-time youth jobs has fallen significantly – by 43 per cent for 15- to 19-year-olds, and 23 per cent across the 15 to 24 age group, according to the ABS Labour Force Survey (ABS 1998b). In 1998, less than 17 per cent of young people aged 15 to 19 had full-time jobs compared to 60 per cent during the 1960s. According to ABS Labour Force data, approximately 947,000 15- to 24-year-olds had full-time employment in 1998, amounting to 35.6 per cent of the population (ABS 1998b). Agriculture as an industry sector has seen a dramatic loss of jobs for young people. From 1978 to 1997, the loss of employment positions was 30.6 per cent and 9 per cent for 15- to 19- and 20- to 24-year-olds respectively (Barnes 1999, p.55).

While the number of full-time youth jobs has decreased over the past 20 years, part-time and casual employment has increased significantly over the same period. The overall number of jobs has increased in the past 20 years by 40 per cent. The number of part-time jobs has increased in excess of 133 per cent. In 1997, part-time employment represented 25.7 per cent of total employment, up from only 16 per cent in 1978 (Barnes et al. 1999, p.xix).

The most dramatic increases in part-time jobs have occurred within the youth labour market. There are now more young people in part-time employment than in full-time employment. The degree of underemployment, which is as high as for the general population, suggests that many young people would prefer to be in full-time employment, but are constrained by the lack of demand in the youth labour market (Lewis & McLean 1999).

Labour markets for young people have also become highly fragmented with the majority of work on offer being "casualised" (55%) compared to a decade ago (24% in 1984).[1] It is estimated that 10 per cent of teenagers are spending their late teenage years between intermittent periods of casual work and periods of unemployment. The ABS (1998b) found that in 1986, 42 per cent of casual employees would have preferred permanent employment. Research, however, suggests that most of the part-time and casual work is being done by students, rather than genuinely unemployed young people (Lewis & McLean 1999; Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee 1999).

These trends suggest that both supply decisions by young people with regard to work and education, and demand constraints (unemployment and underemployment) are shaping the teenage labour market of Australia (Lewis & McLean 1999).

One consequence of the current employment and unemployment trends, and the high rates of unemployment, is that employers have set new standards on the quality and standard of whom they employ. The era in

which a Year 10 pass could guarantee employment or access to training has passed. In a job-competitive society, those with higher educational and skills levels are moving into jobs and apprenticeships that had previously required lower standards of entrance. Employers are now requiring qualified employees with a familiarity with processes and procedures relevant to the job, and expecting employees to be able to demonstrate highly effective personal and communication skills. In addition, employers want employees with teamwork abilities, management and task orientation skills and the ability to work independently (e.g. Lewis & McLean 1999; Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee 1999; Falk & Kilpatrick 1999).

Traditionally, young men and women tend to be employed in industries that do not require extensive formal training or educational standards, the majority being employed in the retail, manufacturing and, food and beverages services. The skills mentioned above are becoming less important to these youth-predominated industries as technology improves and employers prefer to train young employees (National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET) 1995). The NBEET report points out, however, the increased emphasis on consumer service skills and personal presentation in these industries.

More than 300,000 teenagers are employed in predominantly low-skilled jobs on a part-time or casual basis while also studying at school or university full time. At the same time, more than 60,000 teenagers are struggling to find full-time work, and nearly 13,000 teenagers have been unemployed for more than a year (Spierings 1998).

Small employers in the service sector of the economy, however, appear to be reluctant to invest in the long-term development and training of young people on the job, and this is a key factor inhibiting a lively and dynamic transfer of young people and skills between sectors. A survey of small business operators in 1997 found that only 13 per cent intended to send employees to training courses, with product knowledge and computer training being the most common training sought (ABS 1997c, p.30).

Another notable employment trend is the steady increase of small businesses. Commentators describe small business as the "backbone" of Australian enterprise and the main source of employment opportunities. Recent research states that "95 per cent of Australian business is 'small', and that 54 per cent of these businesses do not employ any staff. A further 36 per cent employ fewer than 10 people" (Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee 1999, p.37).

Between 1995 and 1997, the number of young people aged 15 to 19 years involved in operating a small business increased from 1,800 to 2,500 for young men, and from 600 to 2,000 for young women. This, however, must be seen in the context of an overall decrease of small business operators under the age of 30 in the same two-year period.

> *... Over the two years, the number of small business operators less than 30 years of age decreased by 11.5%. This group now only makes up 10% of the total [of small business operators] compared to 12% in 1995. Conversely, the number of operators over 50 increased by 17.4%, and those aged between 30 and 50 increased by 3.2%* (ABS 1997c, p.5).

The decrease in small business ownership by young people is the result of a number of factors. Recent research indicates that most people have negative perceptions about what it would be like in small business. This negativity is coupled with a basic and simplistic understanding of small business as the "corner shop" (Mozell & Morley cited in Industry Taskforce on Leadership and Management Skills 1995).

Also, although the importance of role models in small business has been demonstrated in research (e.g. Kenyon & White 1995), there are few active young role models in small business for young people. Young business people are not often promoted in schools, communities or media. Schools and standard school curriculum don't provide relevant role modelling for business enterprise (Kenyon & White 1995).

Role models provide practical real life examples of career opportunities and are powerful influences upon career planning and decision-making. When it comes to small business and the decision to investigate the option of self-employment, there appears to be a lack of appropriate role models (Kenyon & White 1995, p.21).

Business start-up costs are prohibitive for many young people. With an inability to access traditional banking loans due to lack of equity, many young people in small business are reliant on family for financial support enterprise (Kenyon & White 1995).

Creating one's own employment through self-employment is not actively promoted as a career option for rural young people. Yet, increasingly, the only real employment opportunity that will enable many young men and women to remain in rural and remote communities is the creation of their own employment. The

promotion of self-employment and entrepreneurship needs far greater emphasis in the life of rural communities and their schools.

The Dusseldorp Skills Forum has indicated that the new service and knowledge economy young people are entering demands relatively ready-made, just-in-time workers who are expected to possess a range of highly developed skills. These skills may include being customer-focused, confident, alert, and capable of developing and maintaining substantial personal relationships with customers, other staff and managers. Employees are expected to be team players, to have the social and cultural skills to mix with others, to take appropriate responsibility for decisions and actions, and to assist in the construction of the team plan. To achieve this, they are required to be self-actualised, energised, and to feel good about themselves and the environment they are working in. They should also have abstract and critical thinking skills, being capable of solving problems on the job as they arise, and alert to management issues related to the development of the product or the design and delivery of the service. They should demonstrate a keenness to initiate reform, and undertake improvements to work practices (Spierings 1998).

We, as parents and teachers, must feel the guilt for some of the demise of the rural communities. Too many of us have been in the business of encouraging our children and our students to study hard so they can go and get good jobs. We have not worked hard enough to help them explore the possibilities of returning to their home communities some day, not in search of jobs, but in search of entrepreneurial opportunities through which they can offer jobs (Dr Edwin Nelson, Coordinator, School–Community Revitalization Project, Nebraska, USA, and 1999 Australian and American Education Foundation Sponsored Fellow on Rural Education).

There are still major distributional and skill distortions in many regional centres. Major skill deficits were reported not so much in traditional technical areas, but more in cognitive and abstract knowledge areas such as communications and interpersonal skills (reported by 57% of employers), management (46%), problem-solving (43%), and trade multi-skilling (38%). These skill deficits, compounded with other factors, are capable of influencing investment decisions and the level of engagement by key private sector drivers in local and regional economies (Spierings 1998).

Enterprise skills = the skills employers and a deregulated labour market require (Dave Turner, Consultant to the Dusseldorp Skills Forum).

Traditionally these skills have been learned through on-the-job training. With employers now wanting these skills prior to employment, the question is where are these skills learnt, especially for young people leaving school? Government employment programs have had a role in this. The research indicated a perception that there has been a shift away from the training component of these programs towards purely job placement which guarantees commercial returns for service providers (Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee 1999). The Senate References Committee emphasises the importance of training programs to be relevant to the current market demands and local work force needs, whether they be school based, TAFE orientated or delivered via government job placement programs.

What role does traditional education play in the preparation of young people for the current labour market? Young women and men have indicated in previous studies that they perceive they are not receiving adequate assistance with planning for their future careers and for future patterns of work. A two-year research study by Byrne and Beavers in 1993 (cited in Halliday 1998) found that schools were assisting young people to plan for their future by providing information about full-time courses of study and tertiary entrance requirements. There was a major gap in information provided to students about work. Additionally, a recent study in Victoria by Teese (cited in Halliday 1998) further indicates "that those students who are in the curriculum streams that are the least likely to lead to higher education are the least likely to agree that school helps them with their career planning". In 1995, 64 per cent of NSW students completing the HSC did not go to university, more than half of this group going directly into a vocational education and training program. This suggests that the strong focus on entrance to university in the final years of schooling is irrelevant for many young people. This is further supported in a recent report by the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee (1999). Whether these skills are also important to students entering university is yet to be addressed.

In view of the trends of the current labour market, and the need for education and training institutions to provide work-ready participants, seven key competencies

have been proposed (Mayer 1992, p.3). These competencies would enable the effective participation of young women and men in the emerging forms of work and work organisation:

- collecting, analysing and organising information;
- communicating ideas and information;
- planning and organising activities;
- working with others in teams;
- using mathematical ideas and techniques;
- solving problems; and
- using technology.

Dunn (1998) suggested that young men and women will increasingly have to take more responsibility for their work practices: they will need to be self-reliant, creative, opportunistic and comfortable with change. The demands of future work practices will impinge especially on young people in several ways, including:

- a future employment pattern that may include an uncertain combination of traditional employment, casual and contract work, participation in the informal economy, retraining and periods of unemployment;
- a tendency towards flat organisational structures requiring employees to take more responsibility for decision-making, work in teams, be multiskilled, flexible and creative;
- the growth in the importance of the self-employment option and subcontract arrangements;[2] and
- a tendency to operate home-based businesses.[3]

2.3 The impact on rural young people

Young people in rural areas are generally at greater disadvantage in the areas of education, training and employment as compared to their metropolitan-based peers. This clearly affects the retention of young men and women in rural Australia.

Between 1991 and 1996, youth unemployment across Australia declined from 19.5 per cent to 15.7 per cent. This decline was less pronounced in non-metropolitan areas (21.6% to 18.4%), and the unemployment rate is still much higher than for metropolitan youth. The underlying rate of rural youth unemployment is clearly hidden by out-migration of young people to areas with more employment opportunities (Haberkorn et al. 1999, p.48).

Unemployment in some Aboriginal communities is as high as 95 per cent (Commonwealth Department of Human Services and Health 1994, cited in Wyn, Stokes & Stafford 1998). "Unemployment," says the Youth Research Centre, "contributes directly to the destruction of rural communities, and ... places greater strains on the provision of support services for those who remain" (Wyn, Stokes & Stafford 1998, p.14).

With the reduced opportunities for full-time employment and the increase in part-time and casual opportunities, there has been a marked increase in enrolments and participation in post-compulsory education and training (Kelly & Lewis 1999). Notwithstanding that many students would prefer to be working, increased education is generally beneficial from both an individual and social perspective in that an individual's employment and earning opportunities and options are enhanced by higher levels of training and education (Kelly & Lewis 1999; Alston 1999; Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee 1999). Research indicates that there is an inverse relationship between education level and the incidence of unemployment for young people in their early twenties (Harris 1997; Harris 1998), although relative educational advantage would be expected to decline as more young people enter higher education.

This does not, however, seem to be the trend in rural and remote areas, which consistently demonstrate low retention rates, higher numbers of early school leavers, generally poor participation in vocational training and higher rates of youth unemployment. There is a significant percentage of young men and women for whom traditional education, training and employment opti[illegible] are irrelevant, insufficient or inaccessible.

Education and training is a field where young people in rural areas face particular circumstances. Rural schools may have lower student/teacher ratios that urban areas but they also have more limited subject choices, lack of specialist teaching and support staff, and fewer resources including library, information technology, sport and creative arts options. Some areas do not have access to local schooling options at all, requiring young people to

Included in the long list of identified areas of fundamental human rights [is] the right of every Australian to education ... rural Australians should not be ignored simply because they are living outside metropolitan areas (Sidoti 1998, cited in Alston 1999).

Children who live outside the main cities continued to receive a second rate education ... The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child recognises the right of children to education without discrimination (Sidoti 2000, p.10).

From when you are about 15, you can get a job picking fruit at an orchard and then when you are older you can start a job in the packing shed. Then if you are smart enough go to university and continue from there, otherwise you might get an upgrade to a service station or a café or a posty (15-year-old female student, in Australian Broadcasting Commission 1999).

travel long distances on a daily basis or to move away from their homes to access compulsory and post-compulsory secondary education. The lack of access to quality education may partly account for low retention and participation rates. Additional factors that contribute to this trend include family influences such as negative attitudes to the value of education and its relevance to the farming sector, previous educational experiences, poor skills in the use of and access to information technology, perceived poor future employment prospects and disincentives created by government assistance and subsidies (Alston 1999).

Major urban centres offer opportunities for work and higher education not otherwise available in rural areas or small urban centres, particularly for older teenagers and those in their twenties. The 1996 Census points to this kind of urban drift. Over 66 per cent of 15- to 24-year-olds lived in major urban centres, compared with 59 per cent of those aged 14 years or less (ABS 1997a).

School retention rates in rural areas are considerably lower than those in metropolitan areas. In Western Australia in 1996, for example, Year 11 and Year 12 dropout rates in Perth metropolitan schools were 25 per cent, compared to 50 and 75 per cent respectively in country schools. (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs 1996, p.63) Given the school drop-out rates, it is not surprising that the proportion of rural young people going on to universities is also significantly lower than the corresponding figure for metropolitan young people. Rural students are generally equally represented in TAFE enrolments, although they tend to participate in lower-level certificate courses compared with urban students. This again may be a factor of limited opportunities, subject choices and technological infrastructure (Macknay 1999).

Between 1989 and 1996 the number of country students going on to tertiary education declined from 25% to 16% (HREOC 1999).

Explanations for poor retention levels and less successful participation of students in rural and remote schools have been documented in a number of recent studies.

Rural students have inadequate access to post-compulsory schooling, with a significant proportion of remote schools only offering courses to Year 10 level. In such communities, options for further study are often not viable in terms of financial costs and time. Travelling to the nearest school can be difficult for young people to maintain over time, and, if public transport is not available, may be difficult due to financial and time constraints of family members. The costs associated with boarding in regional centres may be prohibitive for many families, and for Aboriginal young people may not be seen as a culturally relevant option (HREOC 1999; Youth Research Centre 1999; Chudleigh 1999; Black et al. 2000).

I would like to be a motor mechanic, but if I want an apprenticeship I have to go to another town. Even if I want to do my Year 11 and 12 I have to go to places that are hours away because [my] school only goes to Year 10 (High school student, in Australian Broadcasting Commission 1999).

Distance education may not provide the range of subjects required for further tertiary or vocational studies, and as an option for secondary studies is a poor second to face-to-face schooling. The requirements for home supervision of distance educated students can place unrealistic and unpaid demands on family members.

Even in communities that do provide access to post-compulsory schooling, the range and diversity of subject options is limited, often limiting the options of those students wanting to go on to tertiary or further vocational studies.

Distance education is generally agreed to be adequate for primary students, although an unremunerated burden on the supervising parent(s). Distance education is a poor substitute for an interactive secondary school however (HREOC 1999, p.10).

> *Secondary students in rural areas have fewer vocational subjects to choose from in the same way that they have fewer tertiary entrance subjects to choose from. For many rural students, a primary reason for continuing on at school is to develop vocational skills. The lack of opportunities and options can make this an extremely difficult path of action* (Black et al. 2000, p.81).

Technology is providing increasing opportunities for video conferencing that allows students in rural and remote areas to participate in new curriculum options by linking with a teacher and classes elsewhere. However,

young people on the Eyre Peninsula (South Australia) raised the issues of "too much dependence" on this medium, especially where there are difficulties recruiting specific teaching staff. Face-to-face contact with a teacher is still the preferred option for the vast majority of young men and women.

Rural and remote schools struggle not only to recruit teachers, but also to retain teachers. A report to the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia National Conference in August, 1999 highlighted these concerns across all States, indicating that

> *The shortage of teachers willing to take up positions in rural and remote schools is a serious issue in Western Australia. In South Australia, the Minister for Education, Training and Employment (sic) has recognised there are complex issues affecting rural and remote schools ... staffing is still an area of concern. Getting quality staff is a problem (NSW)* (Rural Schools Report to the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia National Conference 1999).

Rural and remote schools are often able to recruit only relatively inexperienced teachers (often new graduates), and teacher turnover is high. The high turnover of teachers can be attributed to a number of factors including

- lack of professional development opportunities and support;
- isolation;
- lack of suitable housing;
- limited employment and professional opportunities for spouses; and
- lack of insight and understanding of the culture of rural and remote communities (Alston 1999; HREOC 1999; Black et al. 2000).

In many schools the secondary classes are organised as primary classes, with one teacher supervising all subjects over the whole day. They are multi-age, multi-ability and multi-subject area classrooms with one teacher stretched across all the different levels (Northern Territory Department of Education 1999, p.103).

A direct consequence of high teacher turnover can be consistent understaffing due to an inability to fill vacancies. This can directly affect both the quality and consistency of the education provided. Understaffing can also mean classes being combined across year levels and teachers being required to teach outside of their areas of specialisation (HREOC 1999; Northern Territory Department of Education 1999; Youth Research Centre 1999; Black et al. 2000).

A student's preparedness to continue with education is often diminished by what they see as limited local employment opportunities. It has been suggested that this "preparedness" is often influenced by family.

Parents and families who have not undertaken any tertiary education are less likely to encourage or willingly provide support for children to continue to study. In many cases the main encouragement is to have children enter the workforce and thus reduce family cost (Chudleigh 1999, p.3).

The costs associated with education are often perceived as a disincentive. For more isolated students the combined costs of boarding, travel, resources and other educational requirements such as the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) and other course costs can form a formidable barrier in the minds of parents and students. Although there are resources that assist families, they often do not cover the costs accrued and do not recognise the added burden placed on family members directly involved in transporting, supervising and supporting young students (Chudleigh 1999; Black et al. 2000).

For young Indigenous students in rural and remote Australia the issues of education, employment and training are even more extreme than the difficulties presented above. Although the overall participation of Indigenous young people in education increased in the 1990s, the levels of retention and completion remain low. In the tertiary sector, participation rates are lower again, and Indigenous people tend to be under-represented in many career disciplines.

In 1994, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey revealed that nearly half of those surveyed aged 15 and over had no formal qualifications or had not reached Year 10 levels. For nearly three people in ten, the Year 10 certificate was the highest educational achievement (Australian and Torres Strait Islander Commission 1998).

There are various compounding factors that influence these trends for Indigenous communities. Curriculum is often not culturally appropriate or sensitive. English may not be a young Indigenous person's first language. In fact, many Indigenous people may be fluent in a variety of different Indigenous dialects, with English being the third or fourth language to be learnt. The proposed withdrawal of bilingual education for remote communities is a serious

issue for the Indigenous population and the education sector (Alston 1999). Indigenous children who speak no English or limited English are not entitled to the level of assistance provided to migrant children under English as a Second Language (ESL) – New Arrivals Program (Northern Territory Department of Education 1999).

Indigenous people's connectedness to their local communities and lands makes moving away for reasons of education, training and/or employment a difficult choice. However, Indigenous young people and their families are doing it more often, despite the cost. Unfortunately, the options available are limited and the question of what impact such transitions may have on the culture is largely a matter of judgement for students and their families (Northern Territory Department of Education 1999).

Role models in the education, training and employment sectors are scarce, limiting the capacity to challenge attitudes and belief about the value of education and employment (HREOC 1999; Alston 1999; Chudleigh 1999).

Finally, various socioeconomic issues impinge on learning and employment, including severe overcrowding in houses in Indigenous communities, and a domino effect where health and social problems lead to children suffering serious hearing loss, being malnourished and getting insufficient sleep, which then leads to poor attendance and non-punctuality, all of which impedes effective learning (Northern Territory Department of Education 1999; HREOC 1999).

The issue of literacy levels needs highlighting. In the annual literacy tests for Western Australia,

> *the results continued to show that students in country and low socio-economic areas were outperformed by their better-off city counterparts. The Kimberley, Goldfields and Pilbara education districts had the lowest scores for the second consecutive year* (*The West Australian* 25/11/1999).

While 86 per cent of all students who sat the tests achieved standards expected of their age groups, the figure in the Kimberley was only 76 per cent, and 55 per cent for Aboriginal students.

Similar but more disturbing findings were reported in a recent review of Indigenous education in the Northern Territory which found that only four per cent of Year 5 Indigenous students in non-urban schools and 36 per cent in urban schools had achieved the national reading benchmark in 1998. Further, in 1998 the majority of Northern Territory Indigenous students – 92 per cent – progressed past primary to some form of junior secondary school, but only 16.5 per cent moved from junior to senior secondary school. Thirty-seven young Indigenous students completed Year 12 level in the Northern Territory and only 16 young Indigenous people entered university. These figures represent a marked increase in student achievements over the past four years (Northern Territory Department of Education 1999).

Retention of rural young people in education includes familial, social, systemic and economic biases. In light of this, cultural and policy change must reflect a clear understanding of the contributing factors and the interrelationship of the issues. Black et al. (2000, p.80) note that:

> *Developing good policy to respond to this significant problem depends on clarifying the factors at work among the different segments of the population and in different regions. Only then will policy be able to address educational inadequacies that hamper the development of strong, vibrant rural communities.*

The stark reality is that many Indigenous students are leaving the school system with the English literacy and numeracy ability of a six to seven year old mainstream child. With such inadequate skills in literacy and numeracy, Indigenous people while able to engage effectively in their own world, are limited in their engagement with the world outside. They are almost unemployable outside their own communities and even there are largely employed in unskilled jobs and are reliant on others from outside their community for important aspects of their lives (Northern Territory Department of Education 1999, pp.17–18).

2.4 "Bottom up" community development responses

Global and national economic, technological and social shifts, as well as the availability of local initiative and resources have also influenced changes in rural Australia. Although there are common issues experienced across different rural communities (e.g. declining services and service infrastructure, declining populations), some communities have responded to these changes in ways that have had a negative impact on the small

Communities were determined to survive on new, less certain and less lucrative industries even though their populations were declining ... The community spirit of the region, or of towns and cities in the region, is an important element for future or continued growth ... (Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee 1999, p.19).

towns in question while other communities are more hopeful and determined.

Economic factors and outside economic decisions are clearly critical. However, the Centre for Small Town Development's work on the characteristics of healthy rural communities also stresses the importance of attitude, local leadership and effective community development processes and institutions. The '20 clues to creating and maintaining a vibrant community' (see below) is based on work with over 500 rural communities. It has highlighted the importance of:

- belief and expectation;
- local commitment and investment;
- the use of community economic development methodology;
- the presence of healthy community behaviour, e.g. participation, inclusiveness, consensus;
- local decision-making;
- leadership and its continual renewal (including a focus on young men and women), and
- positive and proactive local institutions such as education, local government and media.

Many rural communities are taking initiative to pursue their own economic futures. Seeing themselves as major stakeholders in economic growth, stagnation or decline, constituents of these areas are creating structures and processes to act as political and economic protagonists in the development process.

Roy Powell, from the Centre for Agricultural and Regional Economics, argues that local circumstances and the entrepreneurial flair of local people are likely to determine each rural town's fate:

> *Nowadays towns are really no different from businesses, they need to keep recreating themselves ... the successful towns are likely to be driven by people who are passionate and creative, who see an opportunity and go for it. You need communities with a bit of get-up-and-go spirit. Some have it, some don't* (Quoted in Derriman 1999).

The Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson, recognising this trend, noted that:

> *While there are many serious challenges we can and will meet by working together, we also need to recognise there are many great opportunities that country people have the ingenuity, skill and determination to make their own. There are many country success stories today which we should be celebrating and on which we can build.*
>
> *We need to deliver local solutions to local problems, moving away from the historical one size fits all approach to government program delivery – that was one of the key messages from the Regional Australia Summit* (Press release 31 Dec. 2000).

Community economic development identifies and harnesses local and regional resources and opportunities to stimulate economic and employment activity. Local communities tap into their human, physical and financial resources to maintain and enhance development opportunities and their quality of life. It is based upon the simple premise that a community has within itself, or within its grasp, considerable capacity and opportunity to influence its economic future. Positive economic change involves communities exploring and activating initiatives like:

- identifying local competitive advantages;
- bringing more money in;
- keeping money circulating in the local community;
- identifying new market possibilities;
- understanding existing markets better;
- finding new resources and new uses of resources;
- using existing resources more effectively; and
- increasing the net number, quality and variety of local jobs.

Regional and local communities can do a lot to make a difference. For example:

- retaining and expanding local business – actions which assist local businesses improve their productivity and market share;
- fostering new businesses – actions that encourage and support the creation of new businesses to add value to existing products, to meet changing consumer demands, or to capture sales which might otherwise go to other communities, regions or countries;
- attracting outside business and resources – actions that bring new investment, employers and funding to the community;
- plugging the leaks in the local economy – actions that encourage greater loyalty in terms of purchasing by local residents and businesses;
- enhancing the job-linking capacity of the community – actions that utilise community development processes and social networks to support the job search activities of unemployed people, to help fill job vacancies more quickly, to discover hidden job opportunities, to improve access to job creation assistance and to help counter attitudinal reasons why some employers may not be increasing their work force; and
- marketing the community – actions that enhance the appeal and image of the community to potential visitors and new settlers.

Many communities are beginning to develop innovative ways in which local residents can contribute to the future directions and development activities of their area. The following initiatives, drawn from consulted communities, illustrate examples of action being planned and implemented at the local level to enhance pathway opportunities for young men and women.

Hyden is a small farming community of 600 people situated on the eastern extremity of the Western Australian wheat belt – approximately 370 kilometres east of Perth. Hyden has developed a national reputation for economic and social development initiatives within the fields of agriculture, tourism and business development. Benefits like infrastructure development, the retention and attraction of young people, and local leadership development have followed.

Hyden

Hyden has access to once-weekly, part-time banking, and police services and utility services are provided on a needs basis only. Hyden has a 99 per cent employment rate with most residents being employed in privately owned small businesses. With the exception of schoolteachers, there are no public service employees in the town.

To nurture teamwork, local leadership, positive vision and initiative to improve community resources and facilities for community residents of all ages, and to work cooperatively with determination and hard work to ensure that existing and new rural based businesses, tourism and agriculture are modern, productive and will have a thriving and sustainable long term future within Hyden's small but vibrant and forward-looking community (Hyden Vision Statement 1999).

With a desire to build a lifestyle attraction of their community, Hyden has along history of "bottom up" community initiatives. The Hyden Progress Association was founded in 1930s, and the first major cooperative economic initiative occurred in the 1960s when 20 farmers financed a tourism complex (motel/hotel/roadhouse) to derive local economic, job and social benefits from tourism. In the past three years the following initiatives have been developed. They were aimed especially at retaining and attracting young people to their community by addressing employment, housing, education, participation and lifestyle needs of young people.

- creation of 10 young singles housing units (see 3.1.5 below);
- establishment of a telecentre;
- creation of a youth coordinator position;
- creation of a regional airport;
- instigation of the "Hyden Hair Raiser" weekend, when over 80 local residents participate in a community team-building initiative;
- development of a major campaign to plug local retail leakage from the town;
- formation of a local beef marketing initiative, creating a price return well above state levels; and
- the fostering of new tourism attractions.

Two initiatives are worth highlighting. First, a simple "bite size" action. Hyden has instigated its own weekly and monthly newspapers automatically emailed to all local Hyden young people studying or working away. Second, the Hyden Business Development Company was formed. Twenty-three young farmers contributed $10,000 each to create a mechanism for identifying and attracting off-farm business opportunities. Its aim is to create new services and jobs. The Company also actively mentors young people considering or commencing their own enterprise.

Bridgetown

Bridgetown is an inland town in the south-west of Western Australia. Through the Bridgetown Secondary College, the community has promoted the positive involvement of young people in the community, and created new pathways.

Two community initiatives are well worth highlighting. The Annual Bridgetown Blues Festival is used as a tool to create new opportunities for local men and women through organisational roles, performances and the development and release of music disks. The festival has become a core element of the external curriculum activities supported by the secondary college.

The Youth Outreach Program (see Chapter 4 for details) is a youth mentor program that operates in Bridgetown and provides individualised support to young people at risk of unemployment or alienation from education. Local people are paid as mentors to assist young people to develop an action plan to identify and achieve their employment goals.

Dongara Denison

Dongara Denison is a small coastal community located 370 km north of Perth. It has a strong track record of community development planning through Community Focus, a community organisation that performs an effective coordination role between the various community organisations and the local shire.

The community is concerned about the number of young men and women who leave the community and do not return. A variety of community consultations have identified a range of issues that need addressing – employment, education and recreational opportunities for young people and their families are central. In addition to community consultations, Dongara residents regularly attend forums throughout Western Australia to develop ideas for involving young men and women in their successful community planning and action efforts.

An example of a key youth initiative developed over the past 12 months with the aim of retaining young people is the formation of a Youth Council to create a conduit between the local shire council and young people. The Youth Council is coordinated by the Deputy CEO and a young Council employee (Environmental Officer). This strong liaison with Council has been a key factor in the Youth Council's high quality and range of initiatives. The Youth Council also has representation on many community committees. Examples of initiatives include:

Our future lies in our young people. We had the attitude as tradespeople that there is "never another opportunity" – we are now re-thinking that negative stance – and the result of a group effort is now six trade apprenticeships and I am sure more will be taken on during the coming 12 months (Tradesperson, Boonah, Qld).

- Reopening the drive-in theatre – one of the first initiatives for the Youth Council has been the leasing of the old disused drive-in, and its renovation. A double feature program is now held on three Saturdays per month, and renovation and development of a rooftop viewing platform is currently underway.
- Larry Lobster Festival – this is the major town festival attracting 10,000 visitors. The Youth Council were part of the overall organising committee and also instigated their own enterprise marketing of Larry the Lobster memorabilia.

Boonah

Boonah is a small rural country town located in south-east Queensland. This community has developed a national reputation for the way it has embraced community economic development. Boonah now convenes the annual national Rural Economic Development Institute.

Major local based initiatives are now under way in a diverse range of fields including ecotourism, agricultural value adding, flora culture and business development.

An example of how things happen in Boonah is the formation of a local tradesperson cooperative arrangement. Tradespeople got together around a table (and some bars) and talked about the impact of outside competition and the subsequent leakage of local dollars. Eight tradespeople have now formed a company aimed at securing this market. Other local tradespeople are being linked into this market. The spin-off is jobs for local young people. From a situation where no local trade apprentices were employed, six trade apprentices have been taken on in the past 12 months.

I've stopped waiting for the cavalry from outside to come and save us – we've decided to adopt a 'if it is to be, it's up to me' attitude. What has happened over the last 12months is incredible, and I know it is having an impact on making this place more attractive for young men and women (Editor, *Boonah Guardian*).

Benalla

Benalla is a rural community located in the north-central region of Victoria in the immediate vicinity of the Victorian snowfields. Benalla, in the Delatite Shire, is an excellent example of how a community can work together to overcome the deterioration of a community through the out-migration of its young people. Benalla has developed an international reputation for innovative education and employment initiatives through the Vail Valley/Delatite Shire Exchange program. Now formally affiliated as "sister communities", Delatite Shire and Vail Valley, Colorado, have initiated a reverse-season training, education and work experience exchange program within the respective ski resorts.

Delatite Shire has actively sought the ideas of local young people through a range of consultation processes and has involved local young men and women in:

- the development of a youth E shop (an internet, education and enterprise café); and
- a youth mentoring program supported by current leaders and business people within Delatite.

Throughout Australia, regional and local communities are beginning to experience the benefits of bringing together as many local residents as possible in community planning and action initiatives to achieve:

- a sense of shared values;
- a better understanding of their community – its assets, challenges and opportunities;
- the development of a shared vision of what their

community could become – its preferred future; and

- the selection and development of priority opportunities to secure that vision/preferred future.

All the historic evidence indicates that significant community development only takes place when local communities are committed to investing themselves and their resources in the effort. That's why you can't develop communities from the top down, or from the outside in. (McKnight & Kretzmann 1996)

A key motivation behind these "bottom up, inside out" efforts is to make communities work better for their young men and women.

Footnotes

1 Casual work as a proportion of all forms of employment across all groups has increased from 15 per cent in 1984 to 26 per cent in 1996; Australia has the second highest penetration of casual work in OECD countries, beaten only by Spain (Spierings 1998).
2 By February 1997, there were 1,311,900 business operators involved in an estimated 846,000 small businesses in Australia. This represented an increase of 55.8 per cent from the ABS survey of 1983.
3 A survey by the ABS in February 1997 (Characteristics of Small Business Survey) found that 66 per cent of small business operators work from home.

20 clues to creating and maintaining a vibrant community

1. A group of passionate local people who are committed to spending the time, energy and other resources it will take to make positive local change a reality.
2. A positive community mind-set that focuses on optimism, belief, expectation, hope and "talks to the community".
3. A "can-do" self-reliant spirit – the belief that one's economic and social destiny lies in the community's hands.
4. A shared community vision of the future, coupled with widespread resident participation and support.
5. A willingness to seek smarter ways, experiment, make changes to make that vision a reality, take risks and invest in the future.
6. Opportunity obsession – that never ending search for new and appropriate ideas, development options and possibilities and being a smart consumer of outside resources.
7. Recognition of healthy and sustainable community behaviours such as inclusive community participation, consensus decision-making, win-win solutions, collaboration and stewardship of resources.
8. Presence of local leadership/champions committed to local development efforts, and the continual development and renewal of leadership.
9. A focus on youth development and their active participation in the community.
10. Enthusiastic acceptance and promotion of women in leadership roles.
11. The recruitment, involvement and recognition of volunteers is given constant attention.
12. Evidence of community pride and confidence in terms of physical presentation and local investment.
13. Recognition of the importance of local business vitality through actions of appreciation and support.
14. A practical development agenda which includes bite size and medium- to long-term initiatives, and continuously evolves through consultation and participatory planning processes.
15. A locally-based focus and structure responsible for facilitation, coordination and management of local economic and social development.
16. The identification and promotion of a clear and unique, marketable identity.
17. Forging of partnerships with neighbouring communities for collaborative action and peer learning.
18. Strong belief in and support for local education opportunities.
19. Presence of a positive local newspaper, matched by the ability of local people to utilise all forms of the media effectively.
20. A local government council which provides leadership and vision, and is viewed as a "facilitator" rather that a "regulator".

(Based on the work of I.D.E.A.S with 500 Australian rural communities.)

CHAPTER 3

The experiences of young people

This chapter documents the voices of young rural women and men. Through the consultation process and relevant research, they express their concerns, opinions and suggestions about their experiences within the education, training and employment systems. We deal with the influence of these, and other social and lifestyle factors, on the retention of rural youth in their communities. The chapter identifies core issues that impact upon a young person's options and choices in relation to education, training and employment, and examines the current status of education, employment and training standards and options. We provide an overview of the difficulties encountered by governments and communities in addressing the key needs and basic rights of rural young people. We have also included supporting and additional comments from parents, teachers, service providers and government representatives.

3.1 Retaining young people in rural Australia

Bernard Salt (1999), Director of KPMG Consulting and author of the annual report *Population Growth* since 1989, claims that the key issues for rural Australia are "to identify and to foster those economic activities that will sustain remote settlements and our unique 'heartland' culture ... [and] to develop the infrastructure and programs necessary to hold young people in rural and remote parts of Australia".

Young men and women are a key ingredient of the economic and social future of rural communities. As consumers, young men and women are discerning and are targeted through advertising in recognition of their influence over spending patterns and location of spending within families. As citizens, however, they are rarely recognised and supported as participants and leaders of community enterprise and action. The disenfranchisement of local young people often results in the leakage of rural youth from their community of origin from an early age. This is often reflected in social and employment statistics which indicate a growing number of disengaged young people and a tendency for schools to be seen as part of "the youth problem". Young people are explicitly aware of the negative perceptions and attitudes that communities have about them, and the role of the media in amplifying these attitudes (Office of Youth Affairs 1999).

Farmers' sons are becoming the "lost generation" as they desert the land and head for city jobs ... the loss of young people from the farms and towns has changed the social fabric of country life and even sporting teams battle to get enough players (Ray Lewis, Wickepin, WA, cited in the *West Australian* 20/3/2000).

Recent work by the Bureau of Rural Sciences in the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry – Australia (Haberkorn et al. 1999) has highlighted the dramatic contraction in the population of young men and women in rural and regional Australia. The following two maps illustrate these trends well.

Youth population decline is summarised in Map 1. Core features include:

- A decline of 2.6 per cent in Australia's youth population. This trend was experienced within both metropolitan (-2.8%) and non-metropolitan areas (-2.2%).
- A distinct spatial pattern in the population moves

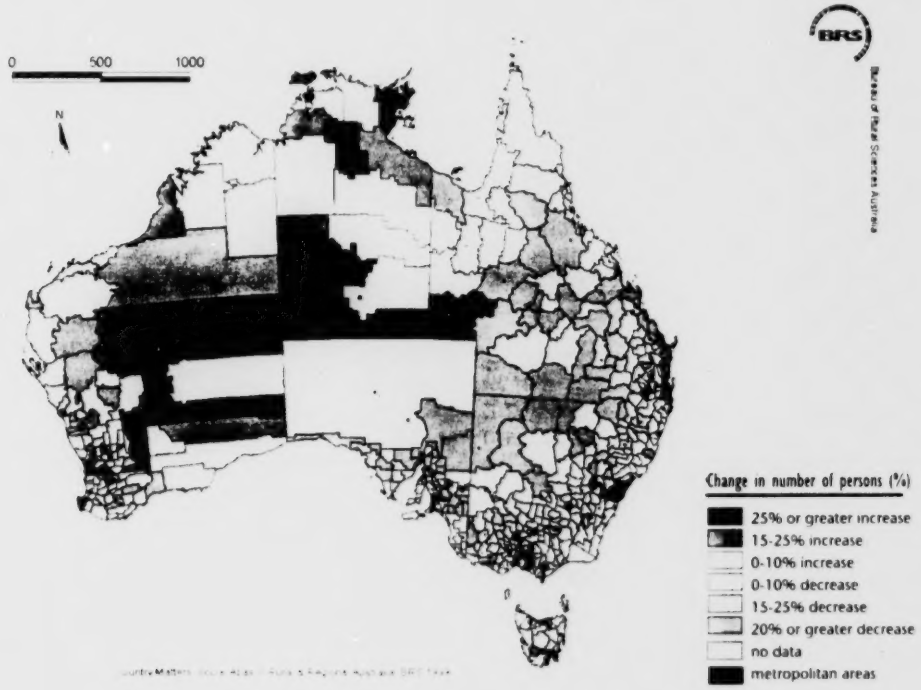
of young people in and out of the non-metropolitan areas. Areas demonstrating youth population gains were restricted to the more settled areas, some peri-urban areas and localities experiencing growth through industries such as tourism and viticulture.

- The main growth area, southeastern Queensland, which became a focal point for the internal migration of young people. Other significant areas of growth include the Northern Territory and large parts of Western Australia, which can be associated with Indigenous population growth and also the attraction of young people to the pastoral, mining and tourism industries in those areas.
- The decline of young people was felt most particularly in the inner rangeland areas and especially the wheat–sheep belt areas of rural Australia.

Map 2 indicates that:

- Australian youth show a high level of mobility, with 21.8 per cent changing their place of residence at least once in the period 1991–96.
- Net migration losses of young people are almost universal from the more closely settled non-metropolitan areas. Data indicate that many young people are leaving after achieving compulsory education standards or completing secondary schooling to access post-school education or in search of work outside the traditional agricultural, pastoral or mining sectors. It should be noted, however, that even those regions demonstrating net migration gains suffer a net migration loss of their young people.
- The major areas of net migration gains are those around major cities and in regional centres, especially in those centres with tertiary education institutions.
- The influx of young people into the more remote areas of Western Australia and the Northern Territory partially reflects the influx of young people seeking work, usually temporary work in the pastoral, mining or tourism sectors.

The maps below demonstrate a trend of young people making permanent moves out of rural Australia and/or



Map 1: Change in the population aged 15 to 24 years, 1991–96

temporary forays into remote areas in search of work. Consultations with young people and stakeholder groups undertaken as part of this study identified seven key issues affecting the retention of young men and women in rural Australia. These were: image and perception; lifestyle; transport; communications; housing; participation and voice within their community, and the availability of appropriate education, training and employment options. This last theme will be discussed in the next chapter.

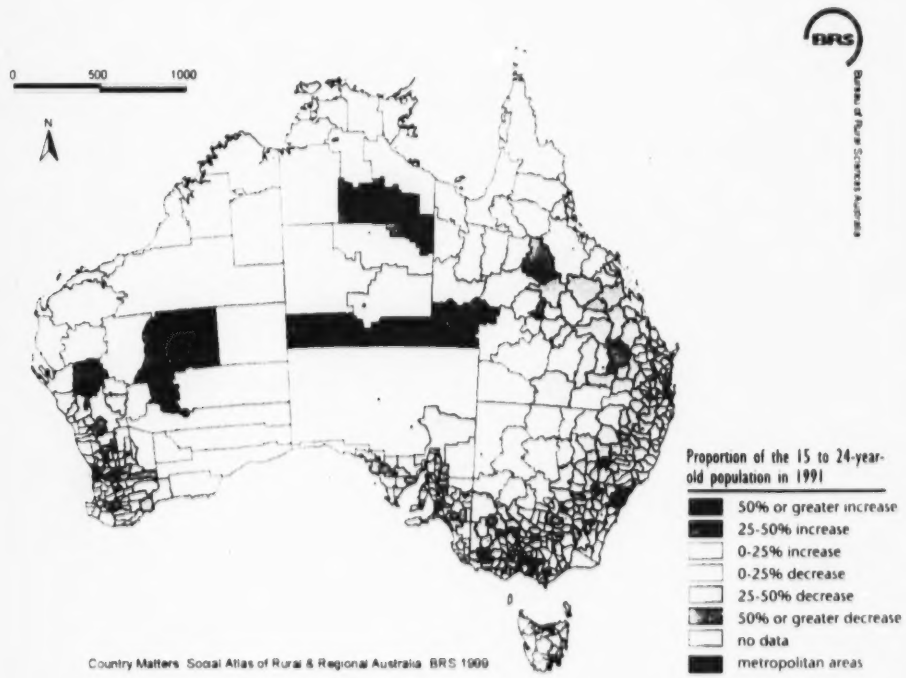
There is a lack of privacy – if you do something wrong, every one knows about it and it sticks to you forever (17-year-old male, Delatite Shire, Vic).

3.1.1 The image of young people

Young people's image and perception cuts three ways. There is the negative perception and image of youth which is common within small rural communities. Young people throughout history have been perceived as lazy, disrespectful, loud, obnoxious and prone to displays of antisocial and criminal behaviours. The traditional view is to see young people as problems, as having problems, and as causing problems. These stereotypes are maintained by the media, and, in a small town, an individual's attitude, behaviour or misfortune can be exaggerated and generalised to the whole youth community.

I've run out of options living here – everyone knows your business and I've been blamed for destruction of property, stealing various things – I'm know as a troublemaker and it's all bullshit. I'll be glad to say goodbye (Young male cited in Beri & Rowe 1999, p.5).

During the consultations, young men and women spoke of the difficulties of small town gossip and of "everyone knowing everyone else's business". It can be difficult for young men or women who have experienced personal difficulties, family conflict or interaction with the local police to maintain anonymity within small towns, and often they are given an unjust reputation because of these experiences. These reputations, unfortunately, tend to be long standing and, it was suggested, can



Map 2: Net migration of 15- to 24-year-olds, 1991–96

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make it hard to get a job within the local community.

Second, the rural sector and a rural lifestyle have a negative image. Young people generally agreed that the "city" was a more glamorous option, with the rural town being seen as "uncool" and lacking the options and life-giving experiences. A common theme expressed by young people, and substantiated by stakeholders, was captured well by a person from rural South Australia: "if you don't leave, then you are a failure, and if you leave and return then you haven't been able to cut it in the big city and therefore you are a failure". This theme, heard consistently during the consultation process and described in a number of documented inquiries (e.g. HREOC 1999), speaks loudly about the lack of recognition and promotion of the value of young people within the rural community. It also indicates the lack of options available to young people that would make their communities an enriching and valuable experience.

Stakeholders and parents were concerned that young people left their local communities without recognising the value of the community to them, and of their potential value to their community. Where such attitudes exist, there does not appear to be much incentive to return.

Finally, young people at times struggle with family tradition and expectation. Where the family has a strong tradition of farming the land, it is often expected that children will take over the family farming role. This may put further education and training options off the agenda, and may negate the dreams of a different career for young people. In the same vein, intergenerational family unemployment may (especially among Indigenous families) make young people pessimistic about the value of post-compulsory education and training.

Only the dags and the boring kids stay on the farm ... the only way to get anywhere is to go to the city and then there's no turning back – not that you'd want to (Young male, Blackall, Qld).

3.1.2 Lifestyle

Lifestyle for young rural men and women includes factors such as: health and well-being (including drug and alcohol issues); recreation; privacy; youth space; and developing identity and independence.

As discussed in earlier chapters, many small towns and communities lack essential services and resources that are taken for granted in larger regional centres. This is not only about health, education and banking facilities. It includes cinemas, youth-specific recreation areas, youth-friendly cafes and centres, and a range of safe and accessible age-relevant activities.

There is a tendency for many communities to rely heavily on a sporting culture to meet recreational needs. There are advantages and disadvantages in this. Sporting activities often become community driven and receive considerable patronage. The down side, young people and key stakeholders suggest, is the exclusion of young people who have little interest or ability in sport. Sporting activities tend to be gender based, with the women of the community playing supporting roles or using such events as a means of contact with friends and other community members. Of particular concern was the "drinking culture" that is associated with many of these activities.

Generally, rural communities provide limited opportunities for young people to congregate. For those young adults aged 18 years and older the local pub is the crucial meeting place. Often all a town may have to offer is a local church facilitated youth group and this may have negative connotations for young people participating. Where there is a youth hall or venue, it is often set away from the main town business centre, often in the back streets. On several occasions during the consultation process, young people said that this illustrated how little their communities valued their needs.

The need for space was identified as a critical issue for young rural men and women in terms of their identity formation and development of independence. Such crucial developmental factors were seen as difficult for many young men and women within small and remote communities where they are dependent on family and where they are identified in connection with their family rather than as an individual.

Many young rural men and women also reported that it was difficult having one community in the city based around the boarding school and another with their family and peers within rural communities. This dichotomy was often difficult to adjust to and they struggled with the contradictory social roles and images in each. For young people returning to rural communities during school holidays and weekends, the differences (and inadequacies) must appear even more obvious.

Still too much revolves around the tootie ... what are we going to do whent he footie team goes ... (Young student, Eyre Peninsula, South Australia).

Due to the lack of recognised recreational facilities young people tend to create their own "fun". In stakeholder consultations, concern was expressed about the

We should be listened to regarding community recreation and education facilities. We are the future (Young person, in Office of Youth Affairs 1999, p.31).

degree of alcohol and drug usage, and engagement in risk-taking behaviours by young people who lack other suitable options for entertainment.

The general lack of access to health services and other supports means that issues of despair and suicide are often not adequately dealt with. "Everyone knowing everyone's business", can either exacerbate the issue or provide a cohesive community response and support.

3.1.3 Transport

For many rural and remote towns there is no public transport. People rely on private vehicles. For young people this reliance means continued dependence on family for access to community centres, education, employment or training, recreation and leisure. This is reinforced by the cost of transportation in rural areas, in time and money. Fuel costs in country areas are often significantly higher than in metropolitan areas.

Kids cope because parents are prepared to spend their whole time chauffeuring them around the country (Mother, Kingaroy, Qld).

Where there is public transport, it often runs with very restricted timetables and does not have an extensive coverage or use the most direct routes. Such operations often run from town centres and, therefore, for those people outside the town centre or on remote farms private transport is the only option.

Concern was also raised about school bus policy, which was described as a form of "social engineering" (HREOC 2000, p.19). For some rural areas, only students enrolled at their local government school are entitled to travel on government provided buses. Students enrolled in private schools, or in government schools outside the local area, are excluded.

A common adage expressed by one young rural person in Hyden, Western Australia, was "no car means no job, and no job means no car". The implications are obvious. Similar views about the difficulty in accessing employment, training and recreation when transport is limited were also raised during consultations for the Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce in the Burnett and Harvey regions of Queensland. Hillier et al. 1996 (cited in Stokes and Wynn 1998) went so far as to suggest that the reliance of young women on older males for transport in rural communities has effectively institutionalised sex as an accepted payment for transport.

Young people contributing to these consultations proposed a number of solutions to the transport problem. These included:

- subsided taxi fares for youth;
- community car pooling opportunities;
- development of a project that enables young people to undertake drivers licence testing via the Internet;
- an open access workshop initiative, including automotive training, for young people to work on their vehicles;
- local business funding and support of a community bus for students, young employees and mature-aged persons;
- a government review of the timetables and routes of existing bus services to ensure they go through rather than around towns; and
- a review of the costs associated with public transport.

Finally, young rural men and women and key stakeholders expressed frustration that young unemployed people were not eligible for travel discounts, and that government program subsidies did little to cover the real costs associated with travel in rural areas.

Many young people living in isolated rural areas miss out on intensive assistance and opportunities to participate in programs like Work for the Dole – transport is simply the issue (Government official, Kingaroy, Qld).

3.1.4 Communications

Information technology and the Internet were identified as a valuable resource for rural and remote areas in terms of education, employment, training, information and recreation. Advances in information technology and telecommunications (IT&T) are currently greatly reducing the obstacle of distance in accessing learning materials and educational supports, and the potential is not yet exhausted. Such systems, in theory, can encourage a culture of student independence and exploration in learning (Northern Territory Department of Education 1999).

IT&T systems also provide teachers with a vast range of teaching resources and professional development options.

This helps to break down the communication barriers posed by isolation and remoteness.

The reality of such technology for rural centres again falls well short of the quality and range of service provided in metropolitan Australia. The costs associated with both the telephone and information technology infrastructure are prohibitive for many rural schools and families. Paradoxically, the regions that could best benefit and have the most to gain from IT&T are the most difficult and costly to service. As such, instead of providing greater equity of resources between the "outback" and the cities, the level of inequity will simply deepen (Northern Territory Department of Education 1999).

Schools differentially supply computer hardware and software to students and teachers, but in many cases the computers gather dust due to lack of funds, technical support or teacher skills; or at best are used by students to play computer games and have limited educational effect (Northern Territory Department of Education 1999, p.51).

Although the computer may be gaining recognition within farming communities, there may be multiple demands on the use of such equipment in rural households. If it is being used for farm business purposes, this inevitably imposes some restrictions on its availability for other purposes. This is especially relevant for young rural people being educated at home. Stakeholders generally acknowledged that telecommunication technology was inadequate for teaching and learning in many outback areas of Australia.

The recent House of Representatives Standing Committee on Primary Industries and Regional Services report, *Time Running Out – shaping regional Australia's future*, recommended that "the Commonwealth Government ensure that reliable and inexpensive Internet connection is available to all schools in rural and regional Australia" (2000).

However, the recent Isolated Children's Parents Association National Conference (September 1999, Katherine, NT) warned that information technology and video conferencing should not be seen as a panacea for the difficulties associated with the lack of face-to-face education. This was supported in the Bush Talks consultations (HREOC 1999) and was a source of frustration raised at all the youth consultations held throughout the Eyre Peninsula during March 2000.

A recent article in *Time* ('A Laptop for Every Kid', 1 May 2000) reported an interesting article about the small rural town of Bloomfield in Connecticut, USA. The community responded to the typical small-town school challenges of falling enrolments and low scores on standardised tests by purchasing a laptop computer for each seventh-grade student and teacher to use both at school and at home. Internet access was also provided through the school. The total cost of this initiative was US$2.5 million. Since the computers arrived, enrolment is up 20 per cent, disciplining suspensions down 80 per cent and scores on state achievement tests are up 35 per cent (p.37). The governor of the rural US State of Maine is proposing to use $50 million from a budget surplus to buy a laptop for all of Maine's 17,000 seventh-grade students.

The recently released report of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Emerging Themes: National inquiry into rural and remote education* (2000), highlights a plethora of issues related to the use of and access to information technology in rural areas. These include:

- inadequate levels of training and professional development and technical support for teachers in IT&T;
- a haphazard approach to IT development in schools;
- limited access to Internet service providers coupled with higher telephone costs and ineffective and unreliable provision of support and maintenance;
- non-government schools further hampered due to lack of funds to support IT infrastructure;
- some remote areas not having the telephone lines to support IT even if they do have the teachers and the technology; and
- little take up of advances in video conferencing. The technology presents a huge potential in rural and remote centres but the infrastructure is not in place and there appears to be insufficient political will to speed up the process.

3.1.5 Housing

Affordable accommodation within communities offering secondary and post-secondary education is a major factor in rural young people's access to employment and training. The lack of singles and affordable accommodation for young people in rural communities has been identified as a major barrier to young people being able to return to their community to take up the employment opportunities that are there or that may be created by an enterprising young person.

There was strong consensus from all parties to the consultations that rural communities have little understanding about the housing needs of young people, and

The Saplings Heights young singles housing project

Hyden, Western Australia

Hyden is located in the central-south wheat belt area of Western Australia, 370 kilometres from Perth. A significant number of Hyden young people continue to live and work with their families and return to family farms and business at the conclusion of boarding school, or have been attracted to the town through the growing tourism industry. While enjoying the extended family and community support, the young people in Hyden were frustrated by the lack of independence and freedom due to the lack of available, affordable and appropriate housing.

This issue was actively addressed at a Hyden Progress Association planning session in 1995, and the Young Singles Housing Subcommittee was formed. With support from and participation of local young people, a needs survey confirmed the housing issues for Hyden young people. With funding from Commonwealth housing grants, support from Homeswest, and in-kind support from Hyden Progress Association and the Shire of Kondinin, the Saplings Heights Young Singles Housing venture opened six modern units specifically designed for young people in 1997. The venture has had 100 per cent occupancy since opening, and continues to be managed by a committee of tenants and representatives of the Hyden Progress Association and Kondinin Shire.

In 1998 a further four units were constructed.

that this is a result of a pervasive lack of consultation with young people about their needs within the local community. While the provision of housing for the retired and elderly has always been a strong community interest in rural areas, the importance of appropriate and affordable singles accommodation for young people has been largely ignored.

Housing was seen as an important factor for young people making the transition to independence. However, many rural and remote communities lack affordable and appropriate housing for young people. These inadequacies within the housing sector were identified by key stakeholders as a significant contributing factor to the inability of rural and remote communities to retain young people in the community.

Consultations with local community service stakeholders also suggested that links between housing agencies and the education and employment sectors within government and local communities were not well developed. This is a significant barrier to establishing effective housing options for young rural people.

3.1.6 Financial assistance

A common theme expressed throughout the above issues is the inadequacy and lack of financial assistance to support the education of young people in rural and remote areas in terms of access to speciality subjects, costs of boarding and excursions, travel, IT&T infrastructure.

Government assistance is often restricted due to parental means testing and eligibility criteria. The two most commonly mentioned examples during consultations included the eligibility criteria for Assistance for Isolated Children which requires that a student does not live within 56 kilometres of the nearest appropriate school. This disadvantages those students, who due to a specific course of study do not attend the local or "nearest appropriate" school. Second, the Youth Allowance, a Commonwealth Government financial assistance scheme which is subject to a parental means test. The HREOC report, *Emerging Themes*, recorded strong criticism about the farm asset test under the Youth Allowance, and authorities have already identified this as a point of action for future Federal Budgets.

3.1.7 Young people's participation and voice within their communities

A common concern expressed in most youth consultations was that many of the opportunities provided to young people in rural communities are often tokenistic, and do not engage them in real work opportunities or experiences.

Young men and women, regardless of their struggles with the above issues, felt that they could make considered input, and important and relevant decisions, if their communities provided them with the chance. This need by young rural men and women to be "informed, heard and resourced" is a theme raised in a number of recent reports (Office

Nothing changes here. Ten years ago I used to travel to college on the private bus to Brisbane each day – even the bus timetables haven't changed since then. It seems like young people just don't exist really in terms of their priorities and activities(Young person, quoted in Beri & Rowe 1999, p.5).

... some farmers are assets rich but income poor and farm assets cannot readily be liquidated without diminishing the viability of the farming unit (Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Reference Committee Inquiry cited in HREOC 2000, p.22).

of Youth Affairs 1999; Office of Youth Affairs and Family 1998).

In some communities, young people complained about being over consulted about their needs, with little follow-up or the invitation to participate at the next level of planning, development and implementation.

Young rural men and women were enthusiastic about opportunities to be involved in local youth-specific actions and in more general community-based initiatives.

Stakeholders and community members acknowledged the struggle to involve youth in community planning on a constructive level and recognise the value of their continued input rather than just identification of issues and strategies. Promotion of participatory and leadership models were important for continual partnership with young people within local communities. The efforts of the Dongara Dennison community quoted above illustrate this passion.

The greatest education "disadvantage" faced by people in rural and remote locations is that to gain an education – any education – they have to pay more. This can include the cost of travel, of board, loss of income, excursions and so on. There is provision of financial assistance but parents report that this fails to meet costs – in the end, parents have to pay (HREOC 2000, p.20).

There is simply the need to increase dramatically the participation rate and visibility of young women and men in rural areas.

3.2 Educational experiences

Differential access to educational opportunity is a major issue for rural Australia compared to metropolitan areas. A Bureau of Rural Sciences map contained in *Country Matters: Social atlas of rural and regional Australia* (Haberkorn et al. 1999, p.79) indicates the school attendance of 16-year-olds. With a national figure of 80.2 per cent attendance in the 16-year age group, the map shows considerable regional variation in rural Australia, but highlights the lower average school attendance (75.8%) than in major cities (82.9%).

Young people need to identify with, and contribute to, building the future of their communities. They need to be able to see that there is a worthwhile place and a role for them in the development of their regions. This is a crucial point of becoming involved in shaping their own future (Government of Victoria 1999).

The map can also be viewed on the following website:

http://www.affa.gov.au/image3/rural_science/social_science/map69.jpg

With many remote towns having limited or no access to post-compulsory secondary education, young people wishing to pursue further educational options must either travel great distances or leave home.

It's fashionable to go to uni ... young people are often chased away (Resident, Blackall, Qld).

Rural education generally is predominantly characterised by low retention levels and high dropout rates in later secondary levels as well as poor participation in education and training. Communities, especially those located within remote and declining areas, have struggled to recruit experienced teaching and staff. Given the importance of the quality and level of formal education in the current labour market, urban drift is a natural consequence.

We should have a lot more say on government spending, voting, school, recreation, crime prevention, drug usage, entertainment, education and school improvements ... we need information and input on new improvements to community projects, transport, helplines, youth suicide, where to go when you leave home ... Before the government makes rash decisions that affect young people, we should have a say (because we can't vote) ... young people should have a vote in government issues (Office of Youth Affairs 1999, p.39).

Not surprisingly, throughout the consultations, young people and key stakeholders were consistent in how they felt about the state of education within rural areas and the context of education in rural areas presented above. These included:

- the value and quality of education in rural Australia;
- the availability and diversity of secondary education options;
- lack of representation of rural young men and women in tertiary education;
- issues for teachers; and
- issues of career guidance, counselling and support.

For many rural people, the value of education is not obvious. For many families, few members have engaged in post-compulsory education and even fewer have tertiary qualifications. Views are often contradictory, however. Parents and key stakeholders also highlight the need for education for young rural people as a conduit for ideas and innovative thinking that may ultimately impact on

The proportion of farmers with formal post-school education is less than half what it is in the general population. Yet farm businesses that have people with tertiary agricultural qualifications in the management team generate incomes 40% higher than those that didn't (Chaney 1999).

the viability of family farms and rural communities.

Several young people commented that they had no relevant role models in their communities who emphasise the importance, benefits and value of education and learning. This means, unfortunately, that many young men and women have no voice that challenges family traditions and understandings.

There is also a generally held belief that rural education standards fall well short of those in regional centres. Although acknowledging that this may be the case, rural parents and stakeholders were also quick to highlight that not all regional centre schools come up to scratch either. It is hard to deny, however, that rural schools struggle to provide resources and equipment, including technology.

Rural communities were very concerned about the lack of local education options. With the funding and viability of schools dependent on student numbers, young people in many smaller communities have to travel to nearby towns or board in regional centres for a considerable period of their educational lives. This can often mean travelling for two to three hours a day, with early morning starts and late finishes. It can also mean that parents must provide transport, which is again costly and time consuming.

The dislocation of young people from homes for the purpose of boarding in regional and metropolitan areas has a huge impact on young people, their families and ultimately their communities. This forced transition to semi-independence at an early age can be daunting for young people, and regional and metropolitan education centres are seen as often being insensitive to these issues. In general, it was felt that there was a lack of transition support offered to these young people.

The other option is distance education, supported by School of the Air programs. Difficulties associated with home education included lack of face-to-face teaching and peer interaction, reliance on home technological infrastructure and a reliance on one parent, usually the mother, to supervise the teaching components.

Rural schooling was also reported to provide only a limited range of subject options. This appears to be a systemic resource issue related to availability and retention of specialist teachers and the number of students within schools. The difficulty of recruiting and replacing experienced teachers means that teachers teach outside of their areas of specialisation and that schools have limited access to cultural options such as music and drama. Informants also commented on the need to consider course options relevant to rural life and economics outside of the traditional and mainstream curriculum.

Distance education is fine for kids who are mature, capable of using it and are supported. But it sucks for many young people. We want face-to-face teachers (Young male, Burnett region, Qld.).

The concern for many parents, teachers and other stakeholders was that rural schools, especially those in remote areas, have significant problems in attracting experienced teachers. Newly graduated teachers are often given time-limited contract positions. This results in high turnover of teaching staff in rural schools, with teachers leaving at the conclusion of contracts. For students this means lack of consistency in teaching methods and styles. High turnover rates may also create temporary understaffing.

Teachers also expressed frustration with the lack of professional development support offered to rural and remote teachers. Even before arriving in rural communities, teachers are provided with little education or information on the issues related to living in rural communities. Some teachers also commented on the lack of any welcome events and information packages provided by the community. Such initiatives were seen as essential to the interaction of teaching staff, and the happiness of themselves and their families.

In relation to teachers within schools with predominantly Indigenous students the difficulties are even more evident. The need for teachers to have cross-cultural and English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching skills is of paramount importance in such schools, but is rarely addressed in teacher training or departmental orientation programs. For example, ESL or Indigenous education modules are elective rather than compulsory units, with ESL modules usually designed to meet the needs of migrant students in metropolitan areas and not Indigenous students.

Indigenous assistant teachers are frequently the longest serving members of the school staff, making them essential not only for continuity but for inducting new staff and mediating the cultural distance between the non-Indigenous teachers and the local students (Northern Territory Department of Education 1999, p.90).

A few staff, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous have had a long association with the school. For some [non-Indigenous staff] it is their first teaching appointment. They are generally inadequately prepared for living in an isolated community and working in a cross-cultural environment ... and have difficulty initially with handling children and working appropriately and sensitively with Indigenous assistant teachers. Without appropriate support and professional development, these difficulties can lead to early dissatisfaction with work, low morale, accepting standards below what is required, premature departure, which all lead to have a negative effect on children who respond by not coming to school (Northern Territory Department of Education 1999, p.71).

The Northern Territory Department of Education is one of the largest employers of professionally trained Indigenous teachers in Australia. The importance of Indigenous teachers within the local schooling system is noted in their capacity to support non-Indigenous teachers and as role models to students. Anecdotal reports indicate that local Indigenous teachers are more stable and have a significantly lower rate of turnover than non-local teachers (Northern Territory Department of Education 1999).

The availability and expertise of career guidance counsellors was a concern regularly raised during the consultative processes. The role and value of career and subject advisers was not recognised in many schools, and teachers who fulfil this role often have a primary teaching role first, with career guidance almost seen as an extra-curricular activity. In some schools, teachers were allowed less than six periods per week to organise career programs (including vocational education training and work experience). Informants reported that there appeared to be a lack of information and understanding of options and pathways. Key stakeholders questioned the appropriateness of funding which allocates one career guidance counsellor per school regardless of the number of students.

The concerns about career counselling compound the feelings of insecurity about life and community for rural young people. Participants argued that a critical element of vocational counselling should include the preparation of young people for the transition to adulthood, and labour and training markets, rather than solely relying on career and subject advice, and counselling.

Finally, key stakeholders expressed concern about the lack of coordination and information-sharing between local agencies and schools that have the potential to build and foster local relevance and initiatives through partnerships.

3.3 Experience of pathways from education to training and employment

Young men and women generally reported that the transition from secondary school to tertiary education options, training or employment lacked planning, cohesiveness and support. A similar view was held by stakeholder groups who felt that there were poor linkages between the different sectors and a general lack of relevance in options for young rural men and women.

Rural communities find themselves in a catch-22 situation. Young rural people appear to be reluctant to engage in local tertiary education or employment training options due to the perception that such courses are inferior to regional and metropolitan centre courses. Course funding is also dependent on student numbers and there are too few students interested or available in rural-run TAFE and other education courses. Consequently there are financial pressures to eliminate courses with low enrolment numbers.

When courses and training have been made available in rural areas, relevance is a problem. Education and training are, generally, not reflective of the current demands in today's labour market. Stakeholders were emphatic about the need for training and schooling to have a focus on entrepreneurial and enterprising skills supported by local mentor networks and role models.

Current government school-to-work packages and specifically those related to vocational education and training (VET) programs are seen as too restrictive and lacking geographical coverage in more remote areas. Programs offered in Year 10 and above often miss early school leavers and those at risk of leaving school early – the constituency that would most benefit from them. VET is also predominantly available to regional and urban-based students in Years 11 and 12, missing many rural and remote schools that only provide to Year 10 level. Many stakeholders felt that VET was not effective as a job link pathway, and were frustrated by the apparent inflexibility of pathway models that were developed in regional and metropolitan areas but which have little relevance or transferability to rural and remote areas.

Funding and program development bodies often don't understand about living in rural and remote areas, or the physical and financial costs associated with taking up education and employment training options. Some training options, such as apprenticeships, are limited

Country people are concerned about the quality of their education and training services compared with those enjoyed by people in metropolitan Perth and some regional centres. These concerns include perceptions of:

- narrow choice of post-compulsory curriculum;
- insufficient student support services;
- high staff turnover and lack of professional development for staff;
- low participation rates in post-compulsory education and training;
- student achievement levels which are lower than those of city students;
- high costs of travel and boarding for students who cannot study locally; and
- underdeveloped technology infrastructure to support alternative ways to deliver education and training.

Added to these perceptions is the growing belief that difficulty of access to education and training is actually contributing to the decline of the rural and remote sector. The costs and dislocation associated with sending students away from home to pursue education, the lack of reference to local communities regarding appropriate curriculum and teaching methods and any centralisation of decision-making will diminish the viability of small communities and opportunities for growth. The new century will create even greater pressures on these areas with its demands for a responsive work force that is involved in continuous learning (Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council of Western Australia 1999, p.1).

within small communities, and the support and supervision of apprentices or trainees can be hard to manage in small companies. The experience of the small town of Boonah in Queensland where a group of tradespeople came together as a builders' cooperative as a means for offering group apprenticeships and traineeships is a model worth promoting.

The lack of take-up in rural-based apprenticeships and traineeships by farmers and pastoralists is a major concern. Within the wheat belt area of Western Australia, despite the presence of a traineeship program for over-14-year-olds, the scheme still attracts only seven to 10 general agricultural trainee positions each year. Interviews with representatives of the Rural Industry Training Council, the West Australian Department of Training, the West Australian Farmers' Federation and Rural Skills Australia generated a wide range of contributing factors. These included factors affecting the willingness of farmers to offer trainee/apprenticeship positions, the appeal to young men and women to take up the option and their attractiveness to training providers to promote and organise.

These interviews identified the following as important discouraging factors from an employer's point of view:

- the financial struggle on many farms, which despite subsidies are still financially unable to create any additional employment positions;
- attitudinal issues including beliefs about the difficulties of employing young people, the fear that employment creation will lead to an occupational health and safety farm audit etc;
- the provision and communication of information about traineeships and apprenticeships; and
- the lack of awareness of the benefits of participation.

Both farmers and young people seem unconvinced and unaware of the agricultural traineeships (Staff member, WA Farmers' Federation).

Given occupational health and safety fears, farmers are reluctant to employ people without experience (Staff member, WA Primary Industry Training Council).

The following issues were identified as contributing to the difficulty of attracting young men and women to a rural trainee/apprenticeship:

- lack of clear and appropriate careers information and counselling on rural employment and training options, especially in metropolitan areas;
- poor wages in comparison to urban-based employment and/or welfare payments;
- eligibility guidelines that disqualify existing full-time employees of more than three months and part-time/causal employees of more than 12 months;
- transport difficulties – without a licence and a private vehicle young people have great difficulty travelling to a farm; and
- accommodation – working and living with the farming family is often not an attractive option, yet many rural communities are unable to offer appropriate and affordable young and singles accommodation.

For training providers, there are strong financial incentives to avoid delivering rural traineeships. For example, a training provider will receive twice as much in training allocations to provide a metal traineeship than one involving agriculture.

The elimination of the old Apprenticeship Offices attached to the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES)

The system has changed so much, and people out there in the bush just don't understand it. And there is no one out there to help them understand. Ads on the radio are no adequate replacement for someone on the ground visiting the farm (Employment Development Officer, WA Department of Training).

has made it very difficult for rural Australia. For example, in Western Australia there are now no Apprenticeship Centres in rural areas. In the Pilbara and Kimberley regions only one person (located in the Pilbara area) is responsible for fostering apprenticeships. The loss of the personal contacts has obviously made it difficult for rural employers.

One very positive change in agricultural traineeships is the introduction of the National Agriculture Training Package from January 2000. This package provides a much easier pathway option through the agricultural industry, from a Certificate 1 in Agriculture to an Advanced Diploma in Agriculture. High school graduates this year will generally be able to enter a traineeship at Certificate 2 level, Agricultural College graduates at the Certificate 3 level – all with employee subsidy payments. Upon completion of their certificates, graduates can enrol in an Advanced Diploma in Agriculture program. These changes will benefit both young people and employing farmers, and should bring growth in farm traineeship positions.

Young people coming out of agricultural college will now see their college experience as a start not a finish to their agricultural career training (Staff member, WA Primary Industry Training Council).

The tertiary education sectors also have little understanding of the needs of rural communities and need to review the relevance of courses being offered. The general costs associated with higher education including HECS, other school fees, travel and boarding/accommodation make further education prohibitive for many students. Although subsidies are provided for students living on campus, such subsidies are generally inadequate in relation to actual costs incurred. Cost was often put forward in consultations as the key reason for rural students not pursuing tertiary studies.

Informants were generally clear about the importance of community-based partnerships between education, training and employment sectors. Young people wanted to have a greater involvement and participation in these links, and in the development of infrastructure that would support young people in training and employment within rural areas. Appropriate housing, transport and recreation activities were central in this.

3.4 Employment experiences

Consultations throughout Australia confirmed that for many rural and remote communities (and especially their young people) there is just not the diversity of employment opportunities they desire. Traditional career entry pathways (e.g. banking and railways) have become more restricted as a result of the centralisation and rationalisation of services to regional centres. Changes in employment patterns have also seen a shift towards young people being employed in predominantly part-time and unskilled positions. Many more jobs within rural communities are based on seasonal and causal labour, with the majority of the positions being filled by professionally brokered employment teams. Such trends do not hold much promise for young rural men and women and they perceive the lack of local jobs as a threat to the viability of their community.

For early school leavers, most jobs available are for unskilled and manual workers, with little opportunity for career development. On the other hand, young people with tertiary qualifications perceive themselves over qualified and unemployable. Local opportunities depend strongly on whether such training and expertise can be applied locally, e.g. as teachers, nurses or agronomists. Young people in consultations, therefore, reflected on the need to be "sensible" in choosing career pathways. They suggested that traditional occupations were more likely to provide employment outcomes, whereas dreams may lead to unemployment or frustrating underemployment in an area outside their expertise and training.

Some young people spoke of a culture of nepotism in relation to employment-seeking where it is more a factor of who your parents know, rather than skills or abilities. Often part-time and casual employment options were filled without the need for applications and interviews. Of course, this is not unique to rural Australia: ABS research data revealed that the main source of knowledge about jobs came from friends, relatives and personal contacts, and that 77per cent of successful jobseekers had approached their employer. However, unlike the city, exclusion from the work force because of the lack of contacts can be complete in a small town with only a few employing businesses.

Young people in all the consultations spoke of the need for improved career counselling (including career counselling tools and staffing) and the need for such processes to begin much earlier in one's education. Young people particularly valued work experience opportunities and after school part-time work highly, and would welcome more such preparation and experiences. Small

and remote communities felt disadvantaged in terms of the range and number of work experience opportunities, and requested assistance in being able to access placements in more job-rich communities. In several consultations, young people requested opportunities to catch up with former students of their communities.

Work experience was the only activity I valued at school ... It helps so many people discover what they want to do or not do, and it certainly has led to many young people getting a job offer (Young Indigenous person, Bourke, NSW).

There appears to be a steady push from communities towards community and local industry partnerships to tackle the youth unemployment issues. A component of this partnership was to address the needs for and provisions of on-the-job training for young people. Training is often on the basis of "learn as you go" with employers having little time or the capacity to provide regular training and support. There is a similar issue for pre-employment training such as apprenticeships and traineeships. The growing interest and creation of school-based and group apprenticeships and traineeship schemes (see Case Study 9 – Charters Towers, p.69) illustrates the ability of communities to create more relevant training.

All consultations indicated a strong perception of a decline in the quality of services arising from changes in employment programs and other service change initiated by the Federal Government over the past three years. It should be noted that the needs of rural Australians, particularly rural and remote area servicing, was taken much more into account in the second Job Network tender round, undertaken after these consultations were complete. Tenderers were able to take regional servicing issues and costs into account when preparing and pricing their bids to provide services to these regions, and the number of servicing agents has increased dramatically. The number of Job Network sites has doubled outside capital cities from approximately 600 to 1,100, and more than 250 localities, half in regional and rural areas, have employment services for the first time. However, the negative perceptions indicated in these consultations included:

- the requirement for people to visit Job Network agencies before being referred to employers. Young people without access to key personal resources such as phone, vehicle or computers are clearly disadvantaged;
- certain groups, e.g. people seeking to change jobs, full-time students (who often seek work between the months of November and March) and migrants without permanent residence in Australia are specifically excluded from parts of the Job Network services;
- the capacity of the old Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) to advocate on behalf of unemployed people is perceived to have been reduced in the new service arrangements;
- the lack of the work experience facility was viewed by young people and several employers as a lost opportunity;
- the development of the Work for the Dole program has had a mixed reception within the community and with service providers. This program is based on the theory of mutual obligation, requiring unemployed young people to work for unemployment benefits. During consultations, Work for the Dole was often identified by young people as retributive in name and nature;
- the Job Placement and Employment Training scheme (JPET) provides valued intensive support and job search services for young people. The program, however, is small and especially limited in its coverage to regional and rural communities;
- the movement away from "user friendly" access to employment services, e.g. the personal support services of the "Job Centre" functions of the old community Skillshares, appears to have accelerated the processes of discouragement for the more disadvantaged job seekers. The new arrangements were criticised for offering little moral support or opportunity for social contact as previously offered by community Skillshares;
- young people complained about being pointed in the direction of a computer screen as the key strategy of job matching;
- young people in consultations raised the importance of trust and "knowing the organisation" that is supporting them. The recent announcement of significant changes to the network of providers is impacting on the capacity of "youth friendly" agencies to provide high-end support services if they are just funded for job matching;
- the lack of provision of minimal resources available within the Job Network to support job seekers affects young unemployed people. It appears that very few agencies assist people to prepare applications or provide them with considered advice on approaching the labour market;

- specific functions like the "Apprenticeship Centres" of the old CES are now non-existent in most rural areas, having been centralised in metropolitan regions;
- competitive tendering has pushed job providers into competition leading to a breakdown in community networking and support;
- the job providers payment system has moved the focus strongly towards fulfilling the needs of the employer. Consequently, it is tempting for only the most marketable job seekers to be referred to employers, with many job seekers noting a strong reduction in support; and
- increased travel costs to the job seeker resulting from the reduction in Job Centres and the need for job seekers to travel to and communicate with a range of different agencies.

Communities are becoming aware of the need to become more proactive in employment options that are outside of the traditional career and employment paths, encouraging young people's participation in self-employment as a realistic option, together with the promotion of local employment possibilities. Traditional thinking about jobs was acknowledged as difficult to breach, especially in communities with a long dependence on one traditional primary industry, such as mining.

One obvious gap evident in all consulted communities was the lack of any comprehensive community youth employment strategy that had developed through community analysis and consultation. Helping communities design and implement such strategies is clearly an area where practical assistance was required from outside programs.

Finally, many rural young men and women do not see a future within the community. At two youth consultations, Delatite (Victoria) and Charters Towers (Queensland), not one participant could see themselves resident in that community in five years time. Throughout the Eyre Peninsula consultations, less than five per cent of all young participants thought that they would be living and working in their current community in 10 years time. The key issue was the perception that the community could not cater for their employment, post-secondary education and lifestyle expectations.

3.5 The experience of Indigenous young people

Education employment and training issues for young Indigenous people are similar to those experienced by the general population. However, they are compounded by culture, race and attitudinal factors, and there is a significant difference in degree.

Primary industries are declining. A greater variety of industries including tourism and value adding are required. Support our youth to be innovative in their education and employment choices. Don't stifle creativity (Final message from young people at youth consultation, Blackall, Qld).

Previous chapters have documented low retention and completion in compulsory and post-compulsory education; poor numeracy and literacy skills; higher than average unemployment and general lack of employment and career options. These are key factors in the low numbers of Indigenous youth completing secondary schooling and the decreased likelihood of pursuing post-school qualifications.

Only 19 per cent of Aboriginal students in WA completed Year 12, compared with 45 per cent in Queensland ... "more than 70 per cent were below basic national standards of literacy and numeracy. Part of the problem was that until recently teachers simply expected Aboriginal children to perform less well" (David Kemp, Federal Education Minister cited by Miller 1999).

It was quite clear from the stakeholder and young people's consultations that the current education system is inadequate and irrelevant for many Indigenous young people. Schooling is not a part of Indigenous culture, and consultation stakeholders commented on Indigenous elders wanting their young people to be educated in a manner that is relevant to both their culture and their communities. Truancy (better described as "absenteeism with parental permission") is a major problem. Workers with youth in Bourke, NSW, estimated that one third of Indigenous young students would be absent from schooling each day. In addition, many young people do not adjust well to being away from their communities and family members. The necessity to move to large regional centres for further education, training or off-the-job tuition contributes to the poor retention of young Indigenous men and

Traditional business, including law business and initiations, normally occur between July and November. Everyone is required to attend these and camp in the bush which means the children miss much of this school term (HREOC 2000, p.14).

A lot of children who came to boarding school from remote communities did not last there. They left school and went back because they missed their families and friends. These kids have a strong connection with their community so it is difficult for them when they leave. If they had support groups to help them they might be able to cope better at boarding school (Submission to HREOC 2000, p.15).

Only 87.6 per cent of Aboriginal boys participate even in the compulsory years of schooling. Participation in post-compulsory schooling in the Northern Territory drops to 39.7 per cent for Aboriginal females and 28.2 per cent for Aboriginal males(NT Department of Education Submission to *Emerging Themes – National Inquiry into Rural and Remote Education*, HREOC 2000, p.14).

women in these activities.

The content and context of education, training and employment can also be a challenge for young Indigenous people. School curricula are typically Eurocentric. Many young Indigenous men and women struggle with language differences, some only just being literate in their community language let alone English. For some, English may be the third or fourth language they use. Although the need to teach bilingually within the schooling system had been recognised, this move has been reversed in recent times. This has caused a great deal of concern within Indigenous communities. Nevertheless, a lack of adequate English certainly reduces employment opportunities.

Young Indigenous people have few role models outside of sport who encourage and demonstrate the benefits of education and training. They are often confronted with intergenerational traditions of low or non-existent educational achievements and high levels of unemployment.

A number of Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory have acted to develop forms of training that create and promote the desire and initiative for change. They are conscious that such developments need to operate from partnerships between government and local communities, and not in isolation.

Whereas Indigenous people traditionally were employed in much of the seasonal work in rural and remote areas, these jobs are now being contracted to specialised outside teams. Workers with youth in Bourke commented that 15 years ago there were 15 Aboriginal shearers, today there is only one.

Unfortunately, but probably not unexpectedly, prejudice continues to impact upon Indigenous people's access to education, training and employment. Typically, regional public schools have high populations of Indigenous students whereas the private schools are predominantly white. This "artificial segregation" was noted in evidence given to the recent HREOC inquiry (1999).

The involvement of Indigenous young people in education, training and employment is further hampered by a range of other factors including inadequate housing and transitional support; early parenthood; lack of telecommunication infrastructure; lack of mentoring; poor health; substance use issues, and financial restrictions. High arrest rates for Indigenous young people may also mean discriminatory practices due to having a criminal record.

Limited number of aboriginal young people taking up apprenticeship opportunities – lack of role models is the big issue (Employer, Charters Towers, Qld).

Colour drags you down every time (Young Aboriginal male, Bourke, NSW).

Transport difficulties accentuate employment problems from a number of aspects. Many young people do not have a licence and are reluctant to go for one. Factors, including the lack of a roadworthy vehicle to practice in, the lack of qualified instructors, and the fact that getting a licence requires young people to approach the police, who are responsible for licence testing in country areas, compounds the problem. There is a vicious cycle where many young Indigenous people drive before they get a licence, get apprehended by the police, and face heavy fines and further delays before they can go for a licence.

Lack of employment of Aboriginal people in main-street jobs is an issue (Teacher, Charters Towers, Qld).

Finally, the importance of sport in the lives of many Indigenous people was emphasised in both the young people and workers with youth consultations. Both groups requested greater emphasis on initiatives that built upon sport as a way of enhancing self-esteem and life direction.

... missing out on a huge opportunity by not focusing on sport ... sport is a real positive in the lives of young Aboriginal people (Worker with youth, Bourke, NSW).

The academy approach, outlined in Case Study 11 from New Zealand, is illustrative of the type of initiative being advocated. The new football-based education program being run by the Clontarf Aboriginal College in Western Australia is a move in this direction.

The following extract from a story in *The West Australian* by an Aboriginal employment coordinator in the mining industry summarises the issues facing Indigenous young people.

> *Michael was born in Kalgoorlie in 1980 and raised in the State's northern area. When he was 13, he and his two brothers and sister were abandoned by their mother at a remote Aboriginal community in the northern goldfields. They were taken in by elders and attended the local school.*
>
> *By anyone's standards, the school was under-resourced. The number of students varied between 18 and 26. There was one qualified teacher and one classroom even though the grades ranged from kindergarten to Year 10. Michael finished school as a Year 11 student at the Aboriginal Agriculture School in Esperance. He lived in Kalgoorlie for a couple of years on unemployment benefits and regularly visited the community he regarded as home.*
>
> *When he was 18, he applied for a traineeship with a mining company in the north-west goldfields ... he had a casual attitude to attendance, a fairly poor work ethic and a low level of literacy and numeracy skills. It is my view that his level of education would equate more to Year 5 or Year 6. After eight months with the company, his employment was terminated.*
>
> *Talk to the teachers, most of them fresh out of teachers' college with no cross-cultural awareness, and totally unprepared for the problems these kids are bringing to school with them.*
>
> *Aboriginal role models need to be regularly brought into schools to tell kids to attend regularly and on time, and to learn. Not only high-profile sports people but the Aboriginal mums and dads who support themselves and do a good job raising a family. Yes, there are many of them out there, although we never hear about them.*
>
> (McEvoy 1999)

It needs noting that one improvement in the second tender round for the Job Network was the requirement for tenderers in communities containing five per cent or more Aboriginal people to demonstrate clearly their capacity to help and communicate effectively with these job seekers.

CHAPTER 4

Responding to the needs of rural young people

4.1 Federal Government responses

State and Federal Governments provide significant support for services to alleviate disadvantage for rural youth in the areas of education, training and employment, ranging from financial support to specific programs to assist young people pursue education goals or job placement, support and training.

In Chapter 3, feedback from State and community consultations highlighted difficulties with some programs, notably the Job Network and Work for the Dole. Respondents suggested that previous structures such as the Commonwealth Employment Service and Skillshare were more user-friendly. It is not possible to provide commentary on all the State and Federal Government programs currently in existence. This chapter will, therefore, concentrate on those programs that have a significant impact on rural and remote Australia, such as the changes to unemployment benefits, apprenticeship and training schemes, and new telecommunications initiatives like Networking the Nation and the Telecentre Network (WA).

4.1.1 Social Security benefits – the Youth Allowance, Mutual Obligation and Work for the Dole

Youth Allowance

The Youth Allowance was introduced in 1998 by the Federal Coalition Government with the aim to centralise under one policy a variety of youth subsidies that were seen as complex and inflexible. The Youth Allowance is paid by Centrelink on behalf of the Department of Family and Community Services to young people who are studying, undertaking training or looking for employment. The Youth Allowance allows young people to move between full- and part-time study, looking for a job or undertaking training – or a combination – without having to change to a different payment. For young people under the age of 18 who have not completed Year 12 or equivalent, there is a requirement that they participate in full-time education or training to qualify for the allowance.

Consultations with key stakeholders identified a number of concerns with the way the Youth Allowance applies to rural and remote young people:

- Limited education, training and employment opportunities in rural and remote areas compromised the requirement for under-18-year-olds to be in full-time education or training.
- The parental means test arrangements make it difficult for families who cannot afford to support their children who live away from home. At the time of the consultations, the means test was seen as particularly discriminating against farming families, who, while being asset rich often have limited or restricted cash flow; and
- The parental means test is inappropriate for initiated Indigenous young people. There are difficulties also with the interaction with ABSTUDY, Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) and existing education and training opportunities.

Mutual Obligation

Mutual Obligation is based on the principle that people should contribute to the community in return for government assistance. Young people who are getting the

Youth Allowance for a period of six months or longer are required to be available for activities such as education and training, including literacy and numeracy programs; Job Placement, Employment and Training Programs (JPET); or other activities that contribute to the community such as volunteer work, Green Corps or Work for the Dole.

Work for the Dole was first trialed by the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business (DEWRSB) in November 1997. Government documentation (e.g. the Sponsor Booklet, DEWRSB 2000) clearly states that the program is not an employment program and neither is it a training program. In both cases, young people and stakeholders commented on the perceptions that such programs were seen as an opportunity for local councils and not-for-profit organisations to access free labour for the "dirty" jobs without any reciprocal obligation on their behalf. However, it should be noted that a number of councils and organisations are consciously attempting to "value add" to the program and give young people quality development experience.

Consultations with young people, key employment and youth service and support agencies identified a number of additional concerns for rural youth in relation to the Youth Allowance and Mutual Obligation requirements.

- There is no financial assistance for travel, especially in rural and remote areas where employment agencies are at some distance from recipients.
- There is a general lack of employment agencies in some rural and remote areas.
- Access to infrastructure such as fax machines, photocopiers, employment vacancy databases and Internet connection required to undertake and comply with job search requirements is a problem, and can be expensive.
- Organisations offering Mutual Obligations activities which choose to provide accredited training to enhance the program do so at their own expense.
- There is no training, accredited or otherwise, built into the Work for the Dole model, and hence the program does nothing to enhance pathways to further training, education or employment.
- Work for the Dole implicitly discriminates against young people and fosters the misconception that young people do not want to work, and are "dole bludgers".
- There are major concerns with the type of programs and the level of supervision being provided especially in rural and remote areas. A number of stakeholders told of situations of young people within Green Corps working on projects in isolated areas with little supervision or direction.
- People working with youth were concerned that the Mutual Obligation scenario and associated programs are an attempt by governments to remove the social safety net for those most in need.
- The not-for-profit and community sector is not able to provide realistic and viable employment pathways for young people to move on to. Stakeholders expressed the concern that organisations need to budget for addition employment options for unemployed people as an extension of the Mutual Obligation activities.
- The program is non-voluntary. Young people must undertake such programs at the direction of Centrelink or risk being breached and benefits reduced.
- There is a perception of lack of coordination, communication and consistency between the different government departments that manage and administer the various programs.
- Breaching protocols significantly reduces the financial viability of many recipients. One stakeholder commented that the trend to reduce payments by a percentage of full benefits had the effect of reducing the number of appeals because the impact of the reduction did not seem so marked – "at least they were getting some money". However, in effect an 18 per cent reduction equated to a two-week non-payment period.

In response to these concerns, a number of stakeholders, particularly those undertaking Community Work Coordinating roles, defended the Mutual Obligation and Work for the Dole concepts on the following grounds.

- While the program never claims to be an employment program, it does in fact achieve employment outcomes for some participants.
- It provides participants with "work ready" skills and those skills and attributes employers are looking for, such as team member skills, positive attitude and motivation, and increased self-esteem.
- It provides participants with work experience opportunities for participants that they would be unlikely to access outside of the system. Work experience opportunities are highly valued by young people.

4.1.2 New Apprenticeships in rural and remote Australia

Apprenticeships have been a major source of skilled labour for many Australian industries. In January 1998, the

official distinction between apprenticeships and traineeships was removed with the introduction of the New Apprenticeships scheme managed through the Federal Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA).

The New Apprenticeship scheme combines practical work with structured training. Training, designed by industry to meet industry needs, can be delivered on-the-job, off-the-job or a combination of both. Off-the-job training is provided by the TAFE sector, accredited business colleges or other approved training providers. Apprenticeships can also commence while students are still at school.

Traditionally, apprenticeships took three to four years to complete and traineeships lasted for one to two years. New Apprenticeships are "competency based", bringing in the concept of recognition of prior learning. As a result the average duration of all New Apprenticeships will be less that for the traditional apprenticeships. In effect this allows New Apprentices to complete their training sooner if they have reached the skill level required.

Employers and New Apprentices are supported by New Apprenticeship Centres located throughout Australia. These centres are sites for information dissemination and support to both employers and possible apprentices.

During consultations, stakeholders and particularly workers within the education and training field agreed that apprenticeships represent a practical and viable pathway to employment. They also noted that with the move towards a more structured training component that can be provided through either on-the-job or off-the-job training, or a combination of both, the interest in apprenticeships has grown. But rural and remote areas have not been able to adopt this option easily due to barriers of distance and isolation, poor job opportunities and predominantly small and family-based businesses outside of the major industry sectors.

Non-completion of apprenticeships significantly discounts the potential of this training form. A recent report into attrition in apprenticeships (Ray et al. 2000) indicated that:

- An apprentice's level of prior education appears to have a significant impact on the likelihood of leaving, with the probability of attrition increasing significantly for apprentices who have not completed Year 12.
- The gender and age of an apprentice also have an effect on the likelihood of attrition, with female apprentices more at risk of attrition than male apprentices, other things being equal. The probability of attrition increases with age.
- Apprentices employed with group training companies are at higher risk of attrition than apprentices employed within the private sector and other organisations (pp.3–4).
- Apprentices in the Northern Territory are at a higher risk of attrition than apprentices in any other State or Territory.

Stakeholders raised a number of issues in relation to the Apprenticeship and Training Scheme during the study consultations including:

- inadequate funding of living away from home allowances. For many young people, apprenticeships and/or training options are only viable if parents are able to financially support them;
- covert discrimination against Indigenous youth in rural and remotely located small businesses. Stakeholders said that small businesses tended to discriminate against young people in general, but that it was accentuated for young people from an Aboriginal background; and
- Indigenous young people undertaking apprenticeships within their local communities being disadvantaged by the lack of employment options at the conclusion of their training. It was reported during the consultations that often the only option for these young people was to return to unemployment benefits.

One interesting development in rural and regional areas is the growth in school-based New Apprenticeships, with communities like Charters Towers in Queensland adapting quickly to this initiative (see case study below). The number of school-based apprenticeships in Australia increased from 1,591 in 1998 to 3,994 in 1999.

4.1.3 New Frameworks for Vocational Education in Schools

In March 2000, Ministers at the MCEETYA conference agreed to a policy framework for programs to promote successful transition from school to work or further education for rural and remote young people for implementation in 2001. The proposed New Framework for Vocational Education in Schools includes the following key elements:

- explicit and well-articulated pathways;
- community partnerships;
- lifelong learning skills and attributes;
- enterprise and innovation;

- career information and guidance, and access to student services;
- individual assistance for students at risk;
- supportive institutional and funding arrangements; and
- monitoring and evaluation.

In addition to these developments, the Federal Government has in place a variety of initiatives to strengthen vocational education and improve pathways, including:

- New Apprenticeships in schools;
- Enterprise Education Program to develop enterprising skills in young people through initiatives involving schools, businesses and community organisations;
- work placement coordination and community partnerships; and
- Jobs Pathway Program focusing on young people between 15 and 19 years of age who intend to leave school and look for a job in the next 12 months.

4.1.4 Networking the Nation

Networking the Nation (NTN), the Federal Government's five-year, $250 million Regional Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund is designed to help bridge the gaps in telecommunications services, access and costs between urban and non-urban Australia.

In 1999 the Federal Government provided a further $670 million for this purpose. Allocations within this funding include:

- $150 million over three years to extend the zones for untimed calls in remote areas;
- $120 million over five years for better TV reception;
- $70 million over five years to build additional rural networks;
- $45 million over five years to help local government authorities provide online access;
- $36 million over three years to enhance access to Internet services;
- $25 million over three years for continuous mobile phone coverage along designated highways, and another $3 million to improve coverage in South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania;
- $20 million over three years for better telecommunications access for remote islands;
- $15 million over one year for networks linking Tasmanian schools;
- $10 million over three years for trials in the delivery of innovative government electronic regional services; and
- $158 million over five years to promote the growth of new and innovative Australian IT&T businesses.

Examples of projects funded by Networking the Nation include:

- *Reach Out! Bush Network (Inspire Foundation):* $315,000
  The project covers much of NSW, and seeks to provide 20 telecentre/public access sites in rural and regional NSW. The project particularly targets young people by providing technology resources that would assist them with their education, career development and leisure time.
- *Get IT ... Got IT ... Goo! (IT&T Roadshow):* $32,500
  Located in a range of rural towns in NSW, the project will conduct a "roadshow" to demonstrate a new IT training package developed at the national and State levels to teachers in selected rural locations in NSW.
- *Joint Commonwealth/NSW Community Technology Centre Program*
  This project is a statewide initiative for NSW and involves a funding pool of $8.25m to contribute towards the establishment and operation of at least 55 Community Technology Centres (CTCs) throughout rural and regional NSW. The CTCs will provide Internet access training and a range of business services to their local communities. The project will target towns of 3,000 people or less in NSW, although other locations will also be considered on their merits.
- *Networking Hunter Aboriginal Communities:* $150,770
  the project is establishing public Internet access points in five Indigenous community-based organisations across the Hunter region, and also providing training and other services.
- *Connecting Indigenous Community Links: $143,000*
  Public Internet access facilities will be established for up to seven Indigenous communities in regional and rural South Australia. Training and support will also be provided to the participating communities.
- *OPAL Under25.net: $598,000*
  NTN funding assistance will enable the State Library of Queensland to increase and improve public Internet access facilities and service in public libraries in rural and remote Queensland communities with populations under 25,000. The project will

provide around 100 public access computers, modems, scanners, printers and associated software. It will also provide technical support through the OPAL Help Desk support.

- *The Coffee and Bytes Cyber Cafe: $125,000*
  This project assists the establishment of a public access Internet and hospitality cafe in the Maude Street Mall in Shepparton, which incorporates IT and hospitality-focused employment and training programs for disadvantaged young people.
- *CV Youth Website*
  The project is developing an online service framework for rural and disadvantaged young people across five municipalities in Central Victoria, including the establishment of 10 public access kiosks.

4.2 State Government responses: case studies

Case study 1: Telecentres and telecottages

Western Australia and New South Wales

Description

Many communities are seeking to embrace the information economy through creating a community technology centre, often called a telecentre or telecottage. One example is the telecottage in the NSW town of Walcha, a small town of 1,800 people, 70 kilometres south of Tamworth. The telecottage is a local technology centre cooperative established by local people to improve opportunities for local employment, economic and social growth. It has been a catalyst for a range of new employment initiatives including its ability to attract data entry work away from the major cities. Its local teleworking initiatives have been very successful in obtaining substantial income from the provision of data entry, secretarial, survey and other services. Such work now comes from Sydney, Melbourne and even New Zealand.

The Telecentre Network in Western Australia, which has been operating since 1992, is one of the largest initiatives of this kind in the world, with 60 centres currently operating and an aim of 100 telecentres by 2001. It is also unique in that each telecentre is a community owned and incorporated company. Telecentres are substantially funded for initial infrastructure and coordinator positions by the Western Australian Department of Commerce and Trade. Telecentres are placed in rural and remote communities of less than 600 residents, and provide a diverse range of telecommunications and information technology support as well an other services to local communities. To date, key services provided by telecentres in Western Australia include:

- labour market programs;
- educational programs;
- community newspapers; and
- desktop publishing.

Other services include: access to government labour market programs such as Centrelink and Work for the Dole; university campuses and TAFE; weather reporting; Internet and online services such as ticket sales, banking and email post office.

Key informants from regional telecentres and the Telecentre Support Unit are very enthusiastic about the initiatives being undertaken in many rural telecentres, but acknowledge that the real difficulty and limiting factor was the need for sustainable funding.

Telecentre staff emphasised that the success of telecentres goes far beyond the services provided. Telecentres in some communities have become a social contact point for young people and telecentre coordinators have become mentors for many community members, particularly young people. The concept of mentoring through telecentres is a "grossly unexplored area" (Staff member, Telecentre Support Unit). Telecentres have engaged rural and remote young people in a variety of activities, including:

> **A local young man who did not feel ready to leave his home for boarding, approached the Telecentre for advice. He is completing his Year 11 and 12 through distance education via the Centre. The Telecentre Coordinator is his mentor and he treats the centre as a schoolroom and he comes in every day (Staff member,Telecentre, southern region).**

- IT&T experience through supervised and exploratory skills training in a non-threatening, informal and supportive environment;
- community development and leadership opportunities;
- links to broader education and training through video conferencing;
- links to nationally accredited computer training provided locally;
- use of technology and computer programs, e.g. a telecentre trained young people in the use of digital camera and publishing programs to enable contribution to the local newspaper and the development of a small photographic business in the local shopping centre;

- development of web pages; and
- community projects that develop and enhance work-ready skills such as personal contact skills, interview techniques, writing skills and presentation.

The southern region of Western Australia has developed the Teleyouth project that introduces and enhances young people's skills in information technology. Activities through Teleyouth include:

- interactive and supervised chat lines with other young people in the area, which facilitate links between young people and communities;
- web site development;
- linking young people to relevant education, training employment, recreation and leisure sites;
- hands-on training and computer experience; and
- mentoring and support from other young people and centre coordinator.

Although telecentres are restricted in their capacity to employ local community members, some telecentres have, through Work for the Dole contracts, utilised the energies and abilities of young people in community development projects. For example, one telecentre utilised a Work for the Dole participant to research and compile a local community history. The young woman involved developed key skills in public relations, interviewing, word processing and computer publishing. Additional to the practical skills developed, telecentre staff noted increased confidence and self-esteem in the participant at the conclusion of the project.

In terms of linking rural and remote communities to education and training, telecentres are able to offer online course work through the TAFE sector and are able to broker for specific training on a needs basis. In the Centre of Further and Higher Education (the COFHE–House) in York, Western Australia, tertiary institutions (in this case, Edith Cowan University) have provided rural community contact points that enable young people and community members in general to undertake tertiary courses with onsite tuition and support within the local community. Telecentre staff interviewed agreed that options like this could have an enormous impact on retaining young people in the community. However, this is still a relatively new area and the options available are relatively limited. The potential for online education and training is yet to be fully explored, and staff made the point once again that online education and training should not replace face-to-face options, nor should it be seen as a panacea for remote education and training.

How much telecentres do within local communities is dependent on individual coordinators and the creativity of local communities. Potential has been lost in some communities with the departure of key staff. In such cases, communities were not seen as active participants or supporters of the centres.

Financially, telecentres are also dependent on being able to develop fee-for-service projects to enable centre continuation. For some remote and rural communities this can become too much of a challenge.

The advancements in telecommunications and information technology and a greater understanding of the potential and variety of uses for such technology has led State and Federal Governments to allocate funds for infrastructure and project development. The Commonwealth Government launched Networking the Nation in 1997.

Apart from the focus on improving telecommunications in rural, regional and remote Australia, Networking the Nation also provides funds for projects such as telecentres and community access facilities. In an address to the National Rural Communities Conference in Coonabarabran, NSW, David Williamson, the General Manager of Networking the Nation, described five main characteristices of the program. They were:

- community driven;
- demand driven;
- producing sustainable outcomes;
- pro-competitive, i.e. objective is to attract private sector investment into regions; and
- avoiding duplication.

Variation of the concept of telecentres occurs in most States, for example in Victoria. Such multifunction centres are becoming key components of telecentres to make them more attractive to young people. All those interviewed about the advent of telecentres described them as becoming the core of remote communities, a central point for information, creativity and innovation, and having tremendous potential as a youth development tool.

Case study 2: Youth Desk

Department of Industries and Business Northern Territory

The Youth Desk (Department of Industries and Business, NT), an initiative that arose out of the Territory's 1996 Youth Policy, has been very supportive of rural and remote initiatives. The Youth Desk provides assistance to young people who are considering starting a business (or who already have) through a range of programs which

ensure support, business sector training, recognition and ongoing guidance via consultation and mentoring. The Youth Desk coordinates a range of youth-specific business activities that have been developed locally, are joint enterprises with the business sector or nationwide initiatives, and include these activities.

- *Getting Started*, a business assistance scheme for youth, provides up to $5,000 in start-up capital as well as free business training to young people with developed business plans.
- *Youth Business Awards* are a direct result of Year 11 and Year 12 students operating a part-time business initiative as part of a Small Business Management unit within their curriculum. The Award is a joint project between the Department of Industries and Business, the Department of Education and the Small Business Association of the Northern Territory.
- *Operation Livewire*, a joint project between Shell, Rotary and the Territory Government, offers young people interested in business a mentor in their field and the means to develop a business plan. A cash prize of $10,000 is awarded to the best business plan.
- *Young Business Woman of the Year* was introduced in 1998 as part of the Telstra Business Woman's Award and recognises achievements by young women in business.

Case study 3: Youth Enterprise South West

Rural and Regional Strategy
Victorian Government

An initiative of the Victorian Government in 1999, the South West Action Plan was the product of a joint process between the Government of Victoria and key stakeholders of the south-west of Victoria. The strategy aims to establish a vision and action plan for the region. Youth Enterprise South West, as one of its four key action areas, recognises young people as the "key to change". Fostering youth participation in commerce and civic life is an essential part of the prosperity and social well-being of the region.

The South West Action Plan is a comprehensive regional youth strategy, incorporating:

- youth leadership – increasing the participation rate and visibility of youth in regional affairs and stimulating youth entrepreneurs and future leaders to realise their full potential;
- pathways for enterprising young people – providing pathways and support for enterprising young people, emphasising small business development and refocused education programs;
- South West Education, Employment and Training Pathways (SWEET-P) – coordinating education and training with local employment needs through stronger cross sector links and partnerships;
- new teacher education – providing a new focus for teaching in the region that links to enterprise, local industry and development opportunities in the community; and
- communication and participation – utilising young people's skills and creativity in information and communication technology to advance their own skills and those of their communities.

Case study 4: Initiatives of The Office of Youth Affairs, Western Australia

The Office of Youth Affairs was established in April 1996 to promote the development and potential of young people by:

- developing, coordinating and implementing youth policy and programs across the government and non-government sectors;
- improving access to information and links to community resources for youth; and
- developing programs and services that address the needs of young people.

Specific initiatives of relevance to rural young people include:

Youth Advisory Councils (YACS)

YACS have been established throughout the State in conjunction with local government authorities. These councils are made up of young people elected by their peers and who represent their communities. They are designed to encourage greater participation by young people in community initiatives and to advise government about issues facing young people and ways to address those issues in local areas. The Minister for Youth uses this structure as a means of direct communication with young people. Currently 96 YACS operate across Western Australia, 75 per cent in rural and regional communities.

Cadets WA

This program provides young people with an opportunity to develop self-esteem, teamwork, self-confidence, leadership and a sense of community service. Every senior

high school and private college in the State has the opportunity to participate in the program. Schools may elect to establish Army Cadets, Emergency Services Cadets, Police Rangers, St John Ambulance Cadets, CALM Bush Rangers, Red Cross Cadets, Naval Reserve Cadets, Air Training Corps Cadets or Life Saving Cadets. The funding is not restricted to uniformed groups.

Cadets WA has been well received in schools and many rural communities. Currently in WA, 6,500 cadets are involved in 157 cadet units, with approximately 45 per cent of these in rural and regional areas.

Plans are in progress for the development of an accredited competency-based program for cadets that will provide cadets with nationally accredited qualifications under the Australian Qualifications Framework.

Regional Youth Development Officers Scheme (RYDOS)

The most important role of RYDOS is to increase the awareness of youth issues in local communities and to promote a positive image of young people at the local level. This program gives the regions a point of reference for information dissemination on youth-related issues within the local community, and ensures a cohesive and coordinated approach to the provision of youth services.

4.3 Non-government and community-based organisation responses

Chapter 2 referred to the need for communities to respond proactively to the changes caused by national and global economic, technological and social shifts, and to the importance of community and individual attitude, local leadership and effective community development processes and institutions. This section provides examples of how local communities, agencies and networks of people have done just that, and also details initiatives, developed at a local level, which are beginning to have influence nationally. [Contact details for each case study are presented in Appendix 5.]

Case study 5: Leigh Creek Area School

Enterprise Education Projects
Leigh Creek, South Australia

Description

Leigh Creek was a declining town towards the end of the decade. The town's population had dropped from a peak of 2,500 in the mid-1980s to 1,300 in 1996, and the school population had fallen drastically to under 200 in 1999. With more than 150 empty dwellings, the perception of the area's inability to prosper and grow was evident to the local community. The local mining industry provided few employment opportunities, and the downturn in the wool industry affected both the region and its ability to keep young people on the land and within the community.

The local area school made a commitment to enterprise education as a means of creating a learning culture that empowers young people to be creative and enterprising within education and within their communities. In promoting business enterprise skills, the school aimed for students to recognise the potential for self-employment and creativity of opportunities within their own environment.

Outcomes

- The implementation of the Aroona Catchment Biodiversity Enhancement Project incorporating the Yellow-footed Rock Wallaby Re-introduction Project. Students working with the local community, business community, Adelaide Zoo, Melbourne Zoo and the CSIRO have developed an exciting new conservation and tourist initiative, best described by the information brochure.

  Students will become international experts on the reintroduction program through visiting the site, mixing with zoo staff and assisting with the invention of a world-first automatic tracking process for small mammals. Students will become increasingly involved in sharing their knowledge with the world through developing walking trails, sanctuary signs, brochures, postcards, newsletter, videos, radio interviews, books and web page information.

- The development of the Adnyamathanha Cultural Centre/Campsite by the Leigh Creek Area School in the old Nepabunna School site, including TAFE training for students and adults in tour guiding.
- The design and development of a new tourist route and other tourism products throughout the region. The Torrens Trek is an 800km vehicle-based trail.
- Instigation of the Leigh Creek Regional Visitor Information Centre.

Lessons

- The importance of cross cultural diversity within local regions.
- Utilising "boom" industries and technologies such as ecotourism, conservation, biodiversity and multimedia.

- Local educators, education systems, and local communities and business have the capacity to provide real and relevant learning experiences that can benefit entire communities.

Case study 6: Delatite–Vail Exchange Program

Delatite Shire, Victoria

Description

To create employment and relevant training for its young people, Delatite Shire has developed a unique international partnership with the Vail Valley community in Colorado, USA.

The program has been developed over the past four years in partnership between Delatite Shire, Mt Buller Lift Co., Vail Valley Exchange and Vail Associates in Colorado, USA.

Due to the reverse hemisphere seasons, this program is addressing work force shortage issues for the world-renowned Vail Valley Resort while establishing a more professional work force for the expanding tourism and hospitality sector within the region.

An integral element of the program has been the establishment of a formal sister city relationship which has involved the Vail Valley Exchange, together with Delatite Shire Council to secure the relevant employment and training visas with appropriate approvals documentation from the US Department of Immigration. Successful participants in the program are able to formally work in a nominated position within the Vail resort for six to 18 months.

Outcomes

- From four participants in 1995, 100 young people are participating in 1999–2000. The target is to create an annual participation of 200 young people.
- It is broadening the horizons of young people. As one young Delatite person expressed, "It puts Delatite at the centre of the world."
- All previous participants have returned to Australia with enhanced practical employment skills. Over 50 per cent have returned to the north-east region of Victoria, helping to provide a more professional and committed work force for the expanding tourism and hospitality sector.
- Negotiations have commenced to link secondary and tertiary education providers in both countries to develop further accreditation benefits to participants.
- Young Australians have established a universal reputation with Vail Valley employers. According to the Vail Valley Exchange Chairman,

  These young people make a very real contribution to our community and work force as committed and enthusiastic employees, with business operators saying "how many young Aussies can you recruit for us?" It is a real win-win for both regions as participants return with practical skills and knowledge gained at an internationally renowned resort to the expanding tourism and hospitality sectors in Delatite.

Lessons

- One needs to look further than "one's backyard" for opportunities.
- Such initiatives do not just happen – they require committed and willing partners wanting to make it happen.
- It requires leadership and organisation.

Case study 7: The Burnt Toast Cyber Café

The Salvation Army
Mornington Peninsula, Victoria

Description

The Burnt Toast Cyber Café, initiated in 1992, is a response to the local educational, training and employment needs of disadvantaged and long term unemployed young people. Funded through the Job Placement and Employment Training Program (JPET) the Café is staffed by young men and women undertaking on-site competency based hospitality training, as well as job search skills enhancement.

In 1988, the Burnt Toast Cyber Café expanded to provide Internet facilities to both the clients and general public and became the Burnt Toast Cyber Café.

Outcomes

- From the 33 young participants in 1999, 36 per cent were assisted in a return to secondary education and 58 per cent went on to TAFE training courses. Fifty-eight per cent gained full-time employment predominantly in the retail and hospitality industries.
- The key to the café's success is the holistic approach to education, training and employment which addresses the impact of low self-esteem and poor literacy skills on achievements within education, employment and employment. The café experience provides young people with invaluable jobs skills training, support and contacts with key

employment and industry sectors and relevant on-the-job industry training.
- Through their involvement with the café enterprise, young people have often been reconnected with their communities, and their families.
- Young people, the community, and business and industry sectors have demonstrated effective partnerships.

Lessons
- Funding for such initiatives can be sourced from a number of State and Federal Government departments. This provides a challenge to governments to consider alternative and cross-departmental funding arrangements, rather than the traditional "silo" funding arrangements.
- It is a fallacy that young people do not want to work – young unemployed people want to actively participate in their communities but require supportive relationships and positive work experiences to overcome negative community perceptions.
- Youth unemployment is a multi-dimensional issue underpinned by a range of social and personal barriers – services that support a holistic approach to youth will provide real and sustained outcomes.

Case study 8: The Melton Youth Access Audit Project

Melton Shire Council Youth Services
Melton, Victoria

Description

The Melton Youth Access Audit Project involved the formation of a Youth Audit Team to design and conduct youth friendliness audits of local businesses, community agencies and public spaces, with the aim of providing business and public space managers with information and assistance to develop "youth friendly" areas.

The Project was sponsored by the Australian Youth Foundation and was a joint initiative of the Melton Shire, young people and the business community of Melton. The Audit Project was conducted over a 12-month period commencing in November 1997.

Fifteen young people were recruited to the audit team through public advertisement and direct contact with schools and local youth services.

Outcomes
- The project provided a vehicle for many sections of the community to work together.
- It provided the community with an example of young people being the drivers of a project to address youth issues.
- It involved business managers in a youth services project, and provided businesses with an appraisal of how their business is viewed by young people.
- Audit team members identified a range of outcomes in relation to employment skills development, life experience and an improved profile of young people in the business community.

Lessons
- Young people actively challenged community's perceptions of youth.
- It is a vehicle for providing young people with research and development skills, and employment "ready" attitudes and abilities that will make them more competitive in the labour market.
- This concept is an example of communities actively utilising the skills and active participation of young people in youth consultation, research and analysis, and initiative development.

Case study 9: Youth Outreach Program

Jobs South West, Western Australia

Description

The Youth Outreach Program (YOP) is a mentoring model outreaching to disadvantaged and/or at-risk young people aged 15 to 20 years. The model is based on local mentors working with local youth to become active and valued members of their local communities. YOP is auspiced by Jobs South West, a community-based, non-profit organisation located in the south-west of Western Australia. YOP seeks to empower rural youth in the areas of general life skills, personal development, job search skills, and linkages into employment, education and training options. These aims are achieved by linking young people to mentors within their local community. YOP is community based – young people, mentors, potential employers and support services are all local members of the community.

Outcomes
- During 1998–99 YOP's community mentors assisted 97 young women and men to:
  - identify career and personal goals;
  - process these goals into a series of steps to achievement;
  - identify the issues and barriers in their lives and methods to overcome these constraints;
  - develop links to support services and

community activities;
  - feel a valued member of the society and involvement in worthwhile and useful activities within and outside of their communities; and
  - obtain job search skills, tutoring, work experience placements and other practical assistance.
- YOP has been successfully replicated within communities across the south-west of Western Australia and across varying contexts (unemployment, juvenile justice, family conflict) and cultures, particularly local Indigenous communities. It has achieved this on a budget of $93,000.
- YOP is far more than a job search or work preparation program. Even so, 83 of the 97 participants in the 1998–99 year gained specific employment and education outcomes.

Lessons

Critical factors in the success of the YOP model, according to workers, mentors and young people in a recent evaluation (I.D.E.A.S. 1999) included:

- the community-based nature of the mentor team – locals in their local community utilising the strengths and potential of their local community;
- the high level of networking and advocacy on a local community level;
- the common purpose and philosophy shared by all;
- the accessibility of mentors to young people and their local communities who are able to respond to the diverse needs of the at-risk group with whom they work;
- the passion and dedication of mentors and coordinators; and
- the promotion of young people's independence and right to choose and decide directions and actions, and promotion of confidence of choice and action.

I've been able to do things that I was scared of before – I've gone to interviews for jobs I would never have considered before or had the confidence for (Young person, Collie, Western Australia).

Case study 10: Charters Towers Schools

Rural Industry School Based Apprenticeships, Queensland

Description

A school-based rural apprenticeship scheme has been developed involving four high schools (public and private) in Charters Towers. It provides the opportunity for students to be involved in a two-year course that includes one day a week on the job training and 15 weeks per year paid work experience. The Program is administered by the Rural Industry Training and Extension Inc (RITE), a group training company and registered training organisation which employs apprentices throughout the Northern Territory predominantly in the beef cattle industry and horticulture. All students are registered as apprentices with the State agency. An increasing number of rural schools are now adopting this model.

Outcomes

- A total of 22 students are currently involved.
- Excellent example of collaboration between schools, and with private sectors trainer.
- Apprenticeships are tailored to meet the needs of individual students.

Lessons

- The flexibility of the group apprenticeship scheme is vital.
- The application of this model is possible to a range of other rural-based industries, but is strongly dependent on collaboration and partnerships between the education and training sectors.

Case study 11: Transition Teams

Wagga Wagga, NSW

Description

Wagga Wagga Compact piloted the English Transition Team model in rural Australia in mid-1998. Transition Teams were introduced into Australia by the Dusseldorp Skills Forum, South Australia. The concept is about teams of young people leading their own career education projects that investigate post-compulsory education options, training and/or employment. Students decide who they will visit, plan and organise the visit, and they decide how they will share the information they gained with other young people. It is a self-help approach to careers education led by young people for young people. Forty students, from three local secondary schools and Wagga TAFE participated in the pilot Careers Enterprise Team initiative.

Outcomes

- About 10 projects were organised by young people, including an overview of technical jobs in the media, careers as a flight attendant, local job opportunities in the Wagga Market Place, options for weekend training at TAFE.
- Young people developed their entrepreneur skills as they took responsibility for leading their own projects, e.g. planning, teamwork, problem-solving.
- A celebration was held where students shared their information, and their work and learning was publicly recognised by the community.

Lessons

- Young people can take a lead and support each other in careers education.
- The celebration event showed that young people from various local schools and colleges could work together.
- Support from local rural employers to young people's project requests was integral to the pilot projects' success.

4.4 Learning from overseas initiatives

There are a wide range of overseas initiatives that have capacity for replication within rural and regional Australia. In the following selection, there is a wonderful example from New Zealand of tapping into the passions of young people as a starting point for making education relevant and attractive. The USA examples highlight the importance of school/community initiatives and the ways education can become a focus for rural revitalisation and promotion of entrepreneurship. Finally, the case studies from the United Kingdom provide illustrations of user-friendly models of education–industry links, especially relevant for small businesses and the self employed.

Case study 12: Aranui High School

Sports Academy, New Zealand

Description

Initiated three years ago, this school-based employment preparation project with young disadvantaged Maori and Pacific islanders taps into the students' passion for sport as a starting point to develop more positive attitudes required by local employers. It involves a 24-hour learning week, equally divided to spending time in the sport academy with a coach, and within the education system undertaking subjects relevant to that sport.

Outcomes

- From 33 students in the first year of establishment, now over 200 students are involved in ten different academies within the school, which include a wide range of sports (e.g. rugby, netball, golf) and other interest areas (e.g. carpentry, early childhood care, tourism and hospitality).

The Academy is not just about sports ... it's about getting the changes in their lives – the attitudinal changes. They are tasting success and feeling good about themselves ... employers want to recruit from inside the academies because of the attitudes of the students (Harry Westrupp, Employment Programme Coordinator, Aranui High School).

- Thirty other New Zealand high schools have now adopted the Academy model.
- Over 95 per cent of graduates have found full-time work or gone on to further training.
- The project has not only transformed those involved, but also helped revive the depressed spirit of the working-class suburb of Aranui.
- The retention rate at Year 7 has jumped from 30 per cent to 100 per cent.
- It has reversed the declining population of the school. School numbers have grown from 900 to 1200.

Lessons

- The strong employment focus is initiated and supported by Community Employment Group of the Department of Labour.
- It is a vehicle for making students feel good about themselves and providing students with the skills and attitudes to be more competitive in the labour market.
- Besides the passion for sport, there are other starting points for academies, e.g. art and craft, childcare, tourism and trade skills.
- The academy concept can be transferred to and operationalised in rural areas and low-income urban communities.

Case study 13: R.E.A.L. Enterprises

North Carolina, USA

Description

REAL is an acronym for Rural Entrepreneurship through Action Learning. REAL Enterprises is a national non-profit organisation, based in North Carolina, USA, which seeks

to develop entrepreneurial talent and foster the creation of sustainable enterprises particularly in rural communities. REAL Entrepreneurship is an experiential course of study taught in high schools, post-secondary institutions, and through community-based organisations in which students explore the realities and rewards of small business ownership.

Student participants use their communities and local businesses as laboratories to:

- learn about entrepreneurship as a career option;
- develop skills and understanding necessary for successful employment; and
- create job opportunities for themselves and others by starting or expanding viable enterprises.

The process includes:

- self assessment to determine students' potential and existing marketable strengths;
- community analysis to identify needs and trends in the local economy;
- researching and writing a comprehensive business plan for a student's chosen enterprise; and
- start-up support (including loan capital) if students choose to operate enterprises.

Outcomes

- In 1999–2000, over 14,000 students participated in REAL programs in 33 States.
- Since 1991, over 1,000 instructors have been trained in REAL's curriculum and experimental approach.
- From 1991–99, 659 REAL graduates in the State of North Carolina started and expanded businesses creating 762 new jobs.

Lessons

- The process does create real and ongoing rural businesses and provides the vehicle for young people to adopt the self-employment option.
- As a subject, entrepreneurship does not lend itself well to traditional teaching and learning methods. The REAL program is designed to be taught and learnt through experiential methods – student entrepreneurs are more interested in "getting down to business" than in reading about it.
- The REAL model promotes not only the skills and attitudes for self-employment, but also produces more attractive employees for local employers.
- The REAL model focuses on the concept of entrepreneurships within the context of a rural environment.

Case study 14: School at the Center

Nebraska, USA
"Educating Kids Into, Not out of Rural Communities"

Description

School at the Center is not a place. It is an idea and a set of shared beliefs. While a school is not always physically at the center of the rural community, a school is essential to the cultural and economic vitality of the rural community. School at the Center is a cooperative of rural K–12 school districts and their communities. The cooperative covers all of the regions of Nebraska. Administered from the Teachers College of the University of Nebraska, the School at the Center works to help educators and community members improve local education and local community viability through:

- emphasising the importance of local history, culture and environment in the school curriculum;
- promoting the economic and cultural vitality of their community; and
- utilising the resources of both school and community in developing the potential of youth. The School at the Center has been utilised as a foundation model for the design and creation of the Youth at the Centre initiative being launched currently in rural Australia.

Outcomes

- School at the Center has expanded the relationship between schools and communities making each more responsible for the other.
- Students have to become involved in a wide range of social and economic development initiatives within the community, e.g. building new houses, re-opening the only shop in town, investigation of a new newspaper, etc.

Lessons

- Learning need not be confined to educational institutions – communities can and do provide valuable learning experiences that reinforce their value to young people and encourage young people to review their value to their communities.
- Collaborative partnerships between education systems, community and business/industry sectors are essential and provide a vehicle and the incentive for continual initiative development.
- Schools are a valuable resource for rural communities, and communities provide valuable learning experiences to students.
- Learning can never begin too early – enterprising

and entrepreneurial learning should be considered within the continuum of primary through to tertiary education systems.

Case study 15: Community/School Revitalisation Program

Nebraska, USA

Description

The program promotes the active participation of students and teachers in real economic and community development activities within the local community. The purpose of this program is to discover new and better ways of involving young people and school staff in promoting economic and community development while making learning more exciting for people of all ages. Support (coordination, workshops and small-grant funds) are provided to design and stimulate cooperation action plans by the school and their community. Each community identifies a team composed of a school administrator, community leader, teachers and high school students to plan together as change makers for enhancing the future of the community. The project begins each year with a cluster of teams coming together for a four-day workshop for orientation, instructions and development of action plans.

The Community School Revitalisation Program has been used as a foundation concept for the development of a new Australian model – Youth at the Centre.

Outcomes

- During the past six years, 24 small rural communities and their schools have participated in this program. It has lead to a wide variety of new opportunities for small communities as their young people highlighted areas of need and implemented a variety of community development projects.
- Examples of projects initiated by students include: student-operated stores in the schools; community recycling programs; operation of a youth centre; a business of developing promotional videos; a business of growing and marketing fish; building playground equipment; conducting community attitude surveys; adopt-a-grandparent program; construction of houses; production of and selling products; living history projects.

Lessons

- Local educators and education systems, and citizens have the capacity to create strong communities and meaningful learning.
- A public education requires healthy communities where every person has a place and where no generation stands alone.
- Good teaching connects learning with students and community: deprived of local meaning, teaching becomes standardised and lifeless.
- Rural revitalisation is not just a matter of smokestack chasing or small business development.

Case study 16: UK models of user-friendly education–industry links involving small business and self-employment

Britain

This kind of education uses the community as part of its content. A strong sense of place is part of the curriculum (Lori Utecht).

The following set of case studies from the United Kingdom illustrates education–industry links which can entice rural small business, self-employment people, contract workers and small voluntary sector organisations to become more involved in education because they:

- take into account a lack of significant infrastructure in the employer organisation, e.g. limited support services, no spare supervisory capacity (let alone a community-educator relations section);
- can occur outside of normal business and school hours, e.g. in the evening;
- are time efficient;
- involve activities which are close to the heart and culture of small business; and
- provide a clear two-way benefit to both small business as well as young people.

Case study 16A: Complement the Placement

Pilot in Marpeth, Northumberland

Description

Young people design and manage enterprise projects in their community which are facilitated by a teacher. The young people then reflect upon that enterprise experience and draw out learning with a focus on key competencies. The young people then present their experiences and learning to the person who has the "corner" or business in which they are interested, e.g. a local employer. A "reality check" is done between the young person's experience and the world of small business and paid employment.

Local employers come and listen to the young people.

compare the students' experience to their own work and respond by sharing perspectives. It is a model of work experience relevant to the contract culture.

Case study 16B: Facility for Arts and Crafts Enterprise (Face)

Rural Somerset

Description

Here the organisation provided a helpful set of services for the arts industry, including:

- high quality shop selling the produce of local art/craft businesses;
- workshop for local citizens to work with young people; and
- marketing campaign for local craftwork.

In return, small business offers young people work shadowing or coaching clinics on their craft/art, or even a mentoring service.

Similar infrastructures exist in other rural small business sectors, e.g. bed and breakfast, wineries, agricultural specific areas.

Case study 17: Technical Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI)

Description

A British Government program initiated in the 1980s, TVEI sought to develop best practice in technical and vocational education. National government funding was made available via local education authorities to schools and those authorities to review the profile and contribution of vocational education. It was an attempt to bring about change in schools and broaden the focus on schools from being purely academic.

Outcomes

- Champions for technical and vocational education were established at system and school level. Promotional positions were created and this established a nationwide network of "change agents".
- Teachers were informed and trained in the importance of technical and vocational education. A key strategy of this was the development of education/industry/community links; enterprise education programs; carer education and personal skills development.
- Appropriate in both rural and urban contexts.
- Development of materials and aides for teachers.

Lessons

- Still widely regarded as one of the most successful "change programs" ever developed in education within the United Kingdom.
- The critical role of attracting and rewarding local champions at the school and system level in order to bring about change.
- The synergy and additional power generated for change, by offering the combination of cash to schools to develop programs; exploring local champions; in service training for teachers; and a nationwide network offering support and benchmarking opportunities.

4.5 Potential sources for future employment

A number of core concepts have been raised within this report that suggest potential avenues for future employment of young rural people: small business and enterprise development; utilising current "niche" markets more effectively and creatively; and utilising young people's familiarity with information technology and telecommunications (IT&T) industries. What is essential to the development of such potential is the expansion of the current culture of educational and training systems to encourage an atmosphere and understanding of the value of enterprise, creativity and initiative development. Federal, State and local governments also have a vital role in the development of future employment options through relevant training and employment programs, and ensuring such programs provide more realistic avenues to "real" employment.

In rural and remote Australia, there are a number of key areas that have been raised consistently as potential sources of future employment:

- tourism;
- conservation;
- self-employment; and
- niche marketing.

Tourism is one of Australia's biggest and fastest developing industries. While 60 per cent of tourists travel outside of the capital cities, only 30 per cent of tourist actually move beyond the traditional tourist resorts of the Gold Coast, Sydney Harbour and Uluru for example (Sorenson & Epps 1993; O'Clery 1999; Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee 1999). A key program of the Commonwealth Department of Tourism, the Regional Tourism Development Program, aims to spread the benefits of tourism to rural and regional Australia (House

of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts 1994). This report also emphasises that in allocating monies to tourism, including ecotourism initiatives, priority should be given to projects that are not only environmentally sustainable but which also demonstrate employment creation opportunities.

Tourism, in general, can value add to rural Australia in numerous ways:

- Tourism represents one of the fastest employment growth sectors in Australia. In various brochures, the West Australian Tourism Commission states that "20 additional car loads of visitors per night, each night of the year has the same economic impact as a factory with an annual wage bill of $1.5 million, and those 20 cars per night, each night of the year generates 21 new jobs".
- Tourism is a particularly attractive employment sector for young people – it is estimated that approximately 70 per cent of new tourism employment opportunities exist for young people under the age of 25 years (O'Clery 1999, p.2).
- Agri-tourism is experiencing tremendous growth, especially within the farm stay sector and wine industry.
- Heritage tourism is another important tourism growth sector, and many rural communities are beginning to discover "their past can provide their future". The employment and business opportunities of heritage rural towns like York (WA), Burra (SA), Maldon and Beechworth (Vic) illustrate the potential of heritage tourism. In fact, a community such as York is an indicator of a future trend. York is West Australia's oldest farming district and the Shire of York is still the home of 141 farms. Yet over 60 per cent of the employment in the district is within the retail and tourism sectors driven by the heritage appeal of the community.
- Ecotourism is another rapidly growing sector of the tourism industry, with important employment opportunities. Ecotourism includes nature-based tourism, and involves education about and interpretation of the natural environment. Ecotourism provides significant opportunities for Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander communities as landowners, resource managers, tourism operators and interpreters.

  In discussions with young Indigenous people in communities of Menindee, NSW, ecotourism was viewed as a very viable self-employment option in locations such as the Kinchega National Park.

In terms of conservation opportunities, the Federal Government funds a range of employment programs which focus on land management and conservation activities, e.g. Landcare and Environment Action Plan (LEAP) and the Regional Environment Employment Program (REEP), all provided through the Federal Department of Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA). These training options provide young people who wish to participate in the development and implementation of conservation practices with practical experience in a variety of landcare, environment, cultural heritage and conservation activities.

Jobskills, also funded through DETYA, provides environmentally orientated work experience placements, particularly in the restoration of areas of degraded land. The difficulty for young people is that such programs provide short-term employment and there is no guarantee of future employment. A review by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts (1994) on employment opportunities in the environmental sector suggests that such training programs need to align with specific conservation and environmental studies within TAFE and tertiary education sectors. This report also suggests that graduates of these employment and training programs could be sustainably employed in other government initiatives such as management of protective areas and endangered species, and control of predators and weeds. These activities are labour intensive and predominantly rural and remote area issues.

Another growth industry that has had a significant impact on rural and remote Australia, and indeed Australia in general, is that of information technology and telecommunications. During 1999, it was estimated that 73 per cent of Australians aged 18 to 24 years had used the Internet in the previous 12 months (cited in *The Domini* 4 May 2000). There is a cohort of under-25-year-olds who are growing up with the Internet and using this technology to live and work where they choose. They are the "New Generation Dotcom". The youth friendliness of the information technology sector is further emphasised by the rapid uptake by this age group. In fact, many young Australians know

Most of the potential jobs would be in rural and remote areas and could provide sustainable employment for persons completing their traineeships under the Commonwealth Government's labour market programs (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts 1994, p.111).

more about computers and the Internet than their parents and teachers. It is now estimated that one in four under sevens are computer literate and 65 per cent of students know how to use the Internet (Australian Key Centre for Cultural and Media Research 2000).

The impact of information technology in Australia is illustrated by the following figures from the National Office for the Information Economy:

- growth in information technology jobs rose by 46 per cent in the past 10 years (compared with 16 per cent for all occupations);
- in late 1998, the unemployment rate for people with IT skills was only 2.7 per cent;
- demand for IT workers is growing at 12 per cent per annum;
- there are an estimated 30,000 unfilled IT positions in Australia;
- 7,000 companies have been created in the computing and telecommunications sectors during the past five years; and
- information technology export receipts for 1999 totalled $4 billion (Bonner 2000).

Information technology presents incredible economic and social opportunities and employment rewards to those people who can position themselves to take advantage of it. But it will pose significant challenges to those who choose to ignore it. During the Regional Australia Summit, Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson, summarised the "double-edged sword" nature of information:

> *Technology has caused some jobs in the bush to evaporate, but it has also created opportunities ... While it is true that new information technology means that some jobs which were traditionally done in the country can now just as easily be done in the city, we must never lose sight of the fact that the reverse can just as easily be the case.* (Anderson 1999)

To take advantage of the IT opportunities it is vital that public access and support continues to be enhanced in rural and remote areas. In the United Kingdom, there is a current strategy to establish 700 new learning centres for information and communications technology at places such as local pubs, mobile units and even football clubs.

The positive impact of the West Australian Rural Telecentre Network needs highlighting. Over the past seven years these telecentres have demonstrated the pivotal role they can play in rebuilding the economic, social and educational vitality of many rural communities through provision of access to a range of services and a supportive network of communications technologies. Eventually, there will be at least 100 telecentres in Western Australia offering local people access to one-stop shop services including computers, photocopiers, facsimile machines, modems, scanners, printers, television, video machines, decoders, Internet etc. In addition, they have become the foci for teleworking, telehealth, telelaw, telebanking, video conferencing, online education and government services, and travel and entertainment booking services. They have also provided support for the development of new enterprise opportunities through the provision of business development support, bookkeeping, payroll and desktop publishing.

Such a model needs replication throughout Australia. The Networking the Nation project will hopefully go a significant way towards this. It will be interesting to watch the impact of initiatives such as the Community Networking Centres throughout regional and rural NSW.

Bonner, Chief General Manager, Strategy and Policy, National Office for the Information Economy, summarises the opportunities the information economy offers for building stronger and viable communities as follows:

- greater business and economic development opportunities;
- improved access to national and international markets and market information;
- enhanced access to information and social participation;
- a reduction in social isolation;
- enhanced family communication;
- improved family and community health;
- improved effectiveness of distance education;
- better professional development and peer support; and
- community development opportunities.

During the study consultations, examples of interesting job creation were discovered, which were made possible through improvements in communication infrastructure. For example, a young 18-year-old woman, who teaches piano to 15 students from all over rural Australia from her family station 300 kilometres west of Bourke, NSW (at $15 per student per lesson). With $3 for an unlimited telephone line and a $80 set of hands-free earphones with microphone, this young woman is able to teach piano all over the country. Three of her students in Elliston, Eyre Peninsula, South Australia, were most positive about this method of teaching and the music lesson opportunity. Another such teacher in Western Australia believed such teaching jobs had unlimited potential and said that he had taught rural students the

drums, trombone and flute by this method. He mentioned a colleague who was now living in South Africa teaching music this way to students in Alaska.

Bonner emphasised the importance of the Internet:

> *The Internet has become the most potent symbol of the benefits that can be gained from information technology ... reportedly doubling in capacity every 100 days, it is estimated that there are now in the order of 200 million Internet users worldwide ... the Internet reached in less than seven years the level of penetration into the community at large that it took the telephone 38 years to achieve and television 17 years ... Internet commerce in Australia was worth $61 million in 1997, will grow to $1.3 billion in 2001* (Bonner 2000).

Bonner (2000) highlights the numerous productivity gains that business on the Internet will be able to deliver to rural-based enterprises:

- lower purchasing costs;
- reductions in inventories;
- more efficient and effective customer service;
- global reach; and
- new sales and marketing opportunities.

Examples to illustrate the above include the Great Barrier Reef Visitors Bureau (which experienced 100 per cent growth since going online in 1995), P.J. Pistons (exports one-off orders of pistons for vintage cars throughout the world with orders via its web site), and a second-hand bookshop in a small town in the western district of Victoria that now sells more books on the Net than it does over the counter.

IT&T services and service systems have become more prominent in rural and remote Australia despite at times inferior service and the reality that true equity of access may never be achieved (Hunter 1999). Such technology has seen the creation of terms such as e-commerce (electronic commerce) and teleworking. Such advancements provide enormous opportunity for young rural people to develop individual small business enterprises and to undertake work in geographically isolated regions.

Teleworking is an electronic mode of outsourcing employment. It allows employees to work at a distance from employer centres in homes, remote centres or at telecentres through the use of telecommunications. Acceptance of this type of employment is slowly growing and is a form of employment that has significant potential for rural and remote centres. A subprogram of teleworking is the concept of TeleTask, an innovative project to develop the use of skilled people living in rural areas to complete specific work components for city-based employers (Hunter 1999).

The importance of IT&T in business creation and facilitation can also be seen in the development of networks both nationally and internationally. Networking is a key factor underlying business success and an effective way of nurturing business enterprise. Additionally, online networking could be utilised to:

- provide supportive business liaisons, contacts and mentors;
- enhance leadership capacity and public profile;
- exchange information and receive feedback relative to business performance, business creativity and experiences as business operators;
- circulate a diverse range of information relative to business development, including small business management training, marketing principles and strategies, legal issues and other relevant services (Grace 1998).

Niche retailing opportunities in rural communities were often identified and highlighted during the consultations. Rural people commented on retail businesses, which despite their location, were able to attract significant numbers of customers and visitors due to their niche production and/or services, and particularly because they were able to offer "retail experience".

One of the best examples of this is the Beechworth Bakery, a retail bakery in the small north-eastern Victorian town of Beechworth (population 3,100). Despite being over three and a half hours' drive from Melbourne, and not on a major highway, it has, in a 16-year life, been able to achieve the following success outcomes:

- annual turnover of $3.1 million (from $100,000 in 1984);
- creation of 64 jobs (from two jobs in 1984);
- establishment of a youthful work force (over 80 per cent of employees are under 30 years of age);
- attraction of 800,000 customers per annum; and
- achievement of Victoria's Best Regional Tourism Attraction for three years.

Owner of the Bakery, Tom O'Toole, believes that "the ingredients of achieving dough my way" are:

- quality produce;
- loving cashflow;
- outstanding customer service;
- innovative merchandising (he does have pipes running from his bakehouse to his verandah and fans pumping hot bread smells up and down the street!);
- creative marketing;
- staff motivation and involvement;

- the never-ending search for new ideas; and
- passion.

This is an interesting recipe that can be a blueprint for other rural retailing enterprises.

As stated in Chapter 3, small business development may be the only viable employment option for young men and women. It requires the fostering of positive perceptions of small business and creating an attitude of entrepreneurship within rural youth and rural communities. The case studies presented above provide clear evidence of the importance of education systems, communities and business sectors in engendering entrepreneurial spirit and initiative in young people, which has the capacity to challenge negative and limited perceptions of the scope of small business.

Entrepreneurs, people who start business and make business grow, are essential agents of change who accelerate generation, application and spread of innovative ideas. In doing so, they not only ensure efficient use of resources, but expand the boundaries of economic activity. Enterprising individuals seek out and identify potentially profitable economic opportunities and take risks to test their hunches (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 1998b).

By definition, new small businesses struggle with start-up costs, lack of attractiveness to banking institutions and a high rate of failure. A number of Federal, State and local government programs exist to support young business through monetary grants, information, specific business mentoring support and business training, e.g. Business Enterprise Centres; business incubators; Area Consultative Committees; State and national small business corporations and advisory services; Small Business Enterprise Culture Program, the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme; and the Innovation Investment Fund and Pooled Development Funds Program available through AusIndustry, a Federal Government business information and assistance program.

Finally, local governments and communities can foster employment opportunities through cooperative exchange programs that recognise the benefits of cross-cultural liaisons within Australia and internationally. Similarly, the development of locally based employment and training scholarships for rural young people can be viewed as a means of encouraging the skills and abilities of rural youth. Such scholarships, while supporting rural youth academic achievement will foster local rural community growth and business opportunities by requiring young people to return to their communities to exercise their skills and knowledge. In relation to the employment and training scholarships, these have the potential of operating in conjunction with existing rural apprenticeships and in cooperation with tertiary agricultural and rural studies.

A common factor to all of these potentials is the need for commitment from and coordination across Federal, State and local government, education, employment and training sectors, local communities and local businesses.

CHAPTER 5

Creating better opportunities — conclusions and recommendations

Despite the huge variation in circumstances in rural Australia, there are many common issues. Government programs and community initiatives have shown, however, that strategies to tackle these issues must reflect individual community demographics, culture, need, and innovative and enterprising spirit. "One-size-fits-all" solutions that are developed regionally suffer from problems with relevance and understanding of rural circumstances. Effective initiatives are characterised by partnerships between communities, businesses, key sectors (e.g. education, training and employment) and all tiers of government. Ultimately, the health and well-being of rural and remote communities is dependent on such partnerships and a capacity for the many sectors to work cooperatively and creatively to meet the challenge of the rural decline. This chapter presents a range of recommendations drawn from the consultation process and ranging over key theme areas. They emphasise the importance of partnerships and creativity in responding to rural issues.

5.1 Education

5.1.1 Costs

Major issues include:

- Subsidies associated with distance education generally do not cover costs and are therefore not equitable for rural families.
- Communication infrastructure is expensive due to rural location, e.g. STD costs.
- Lack of subsidies for provision of supervision for distance education students.

Recommendations

1. Commonwealth Departments of Family and Community Services (Youth Allowance), and Education, Training and Youth Affairs (Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme, ABSTUDY, AUSTUDY) should review current subsidy allocation for rural families with the view of adapting payments to reflect adequate compensation for costs associated with distance and remoteness in compulsory and post-compulsory education. While the discount for farm and business assets for rural families for these allowances has been addressed in the 2000 Federal Budget, the situation warrants continued monitoring.
2. State and Federal Governments, in collaboration with private and public telecommunication providers, should review costs associated with telecommunications in the rural and remote regions, and should provide adequate funding for telecommunication infrastructure.
3. Access to appropriate boarding facilities and residential colleges for students from rural and remote areas should be expanded.

5.1.2 Teachers

Major issues include:

- Lack of experienced teachers.
- New teachers to rural areas have limited or no understanding of the culture and conditions inherent in living and working in the bush.
- Inability to retain teachers in the long term, and generally high turnover.

- Poorly coordinated, inadequate or non-existent professional support and development opportunities.
- Cost and travel time prohibitive to undertaking professional development opportunities in regional centres.
- Lack of community involvement by teaching staff.

Recommendations

4 Education departments should continue to develop incentive packages for teachers and administrative staff in rural schools, including housing, professional development and support opportunities. Packages should represent rural teaching as a long-term career option. Measures such as the Quality Teacher Programme may be effective mechanisms for achieving this.

Tertiary institutions offering teaching courses should incorporate rural orientation training, mentor support, experiences and opportunities for trainee teachers (note the teacher training program at Charles Sturt University).

5 Promotional campaigns should be developed, targeting students and newly graduated and experienced teachers, to highlight the benefits and attractiveness of rural lifestyles. Multimedia options should be explored, e.g. Queensland Office of Rural Communities – Rural Lifestyles Web Site (www.dpi.qld.gov.au/rlq).

Local rural communities should be provided with advice on creative ways to implement orientation, welcome and community involvement programs for new teaching staff.

5.1.3 Quality of education services

Major issues include:

- Rural and remote schools suffer from inadequate funding in resources, educational materials, and information technology infrastructure.
- Standard of education is lower in rural schools and generally not comparable to regional and metropolitan schools.
- Limited student support services.
- Lack of diversity and range of subjects including specialty subjects and specialised teachers.
- Lower student achievements compared to city-based students.
- Poor technology infrastructure to support innovative delivery methodologies.
- Video conferencing and the Internet are not an adequate substitute for face-to-face learning.

Recommendations

1 Education authorities should coordinate and review current educational standards and quality, with the view to developing national indicators for assessing and determining quality education in the rural sector.

2 A range of flexible teaching delivery methodologies should be developed (especially involving new technology) to meet the learning needs of students and the professional development needs of teaching staff.

3 Education departments should fund further specific action research into effective and efficient models of career/vocational education, especially models that include preparation for transition, that take into account social, familial and community factors, and that can be replicated for rural and remote schools.

A program to equip every rural Year 8 student with a laptop and provide a local-cost Internet service to every rural school should be considered part of bush technology promises.

5.1.4 Linkages and awareness

Major issues include:

- A lack of collaboration, coordination and linkages between schools, communities and industry sectors.
- The "silo nature" of many government programs and the lack of collaboration between government agencies.
- Recognition of the importance of leadership and youth participation within schools and communities.
- Lack of reference to local communities regarding curriculum and teaching methods.
- Innovative educational programs and community–school partnerships tend to be localised and under publicised.

Recommendations

1 A national clearinghouse should be created that identifies, documents and disseminates best practice in innovative school–community and school–business partnerships.

13 Resource (physical and human) sharing arrangements, including benefits and best practice examples, should be highlighted at the community and State/Federal agency levels by the national clearinghouse.

14 Materials should be prepared for local community organisations and schools on process and curriculum approaches that are able to engage with the local community context, highlighting ways to achieve greater involvement of local communities in the life of their schools, and ways that students can become active participants in the development of their communities (see for example materials produced by Changemakers (UK) and Youth at the Center).

15 Public and private support should be mobilised for the design and implementation of a "School at the Center"-type initiative, which provides the inspiration and support for students to become involved in processes of identifying and responding to the economic and social needs and opportunities of their communities and regions.

16 Rural schools should be supported to enable students to experiment with entrepreneurship opportunities within their communities and regions. The Federal Government's Enterprise Education Program should be enthusiastically implemented and evaluated to this end.

17 Direction and support should be given to local communities and their schools to build a culture of community participation and positive citizenship from an early age. The Discovering Democracy Program of the Federal Government should be employed on a wider scale to facilitate this.

18 School budgets and curricula should allow resources and time to build the leadership capabilities of young people through specific leadership development experiences.

19 The Federal Government's Youth Round Table consultation process should develop a greater focus on regional and remote issues and promote equitable rural and remote youth participation through subsidy support. Parallel State Government processes, like those in NSW and Western Australia, should be established.

20 Programs should be implemented to help young people understand and appreciate local economic change – its challenges, opportunities and implications in relation to the labour market.

5.2 Pathways

Major issues include:

- Transition pathways often lack planning, cohesiveness and support.
- Poor linkages between the different sectors and a general lack of relevant options for rural young men and women.
- Importance of the need for education and training to have an entrepreneurial and enterprising skills focus that has greater relevance to local communities and current labour market trends.
- Importance of community-based partnerships with education, training and employment sectors.
- The lack coverage and relevance of government pre-employment services to rural and remote communities.

Recommendations

21 Local communities, industry and education sectors should be actively encouraged to foster partnerships that enable the development of innovative programs and strategies for new pathways into training and employment for rural and regional young people. The Delatite–Vail Exchange Program is a best-practice example of such partnerships and should be used as a model for wider national application. The New Framework for Vocational Education in Schools should be developed as an effective mechanism.

22 Local communities should be actively supported to investigate, design and implement community and regional school-based apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities.

23 Local communities in partnerships with schools, business and industry sectors should actively foster local mentoring processes and programs similar to the Youth Outreach Program (Jobs South West, Western Australia).

5.3 Employment

Major issues include:

- Lack of diversity, variety and opportunity for employment in rural and remote areas.
- Changing employment markets and trends require communities to develop more active and collaborative partnerships with training and industry sectors, and to become more involved in local employment development initiatives.

- Lack of comprehensive youth employment strategies in most communities.
- Inadequate coverage of government unemployment-focused programs, especially in remote areas.
- Inadequate subsidisation of rural job seekers in terms of transport costs.
  Perception that "user friendliness" of employment services is declining.

Recommendations

14 A nationwide review of current Federal Government departments' unemployment program coverage in rural and remote areas should consider the impact of distance, cost, "user friendliness", and other issues associated with rural and remote living.

15 Federal and State Governments should make fuller use of current infrastructure for local employment initiatives, e.g. rural transaction centres, community technology centres, community banks, and shire councils.

16 The Commonwealth Government should establish pilot projects that incorporate funding cooperation between government departments; develop cross-departmental teams to broker funds for youth initiatives in rural communities based on locally identified priorities; and provide funding to facilitate local youth planning.

17 State education departments should develop enterprise education as an integral component of the rural school curriculum, drawing on the expertise of the Curriculum Corporation (Melbourne, Victoria), the resources available through the Enterprise Education Program and experiences of the Technical Vocational Education Initiative (Britain) in creating senior positions responsible for coordinating and promoting the concept within schools.

18 State education departments and Federal Government vocational and employment training programs should explore the concept of "twinning" programs between rural and urban schools, colleges and training providers to enable students and trainees from rural and urban areas to:

- experience and compare the advantages and disadvantages of living, studying and working in rural and urban communities;
- establish effective communication systems for the sharing of ideas, innovations and creative learning;
- explore and develop the interdependency between rural and urban Australia; and
- more fully appreciate the challenges of rural–urban and urban–rural migration faced by young people.

5.4 Retention and participation

Major issues include:

- Young people felt they had much to offer their communities, but are not invited or actively encouraged to participate in planning, development or implementation processes.
- Communities do not actively acknowledge the value of young people's energy, ideas and commitment to change.
- Young people often feel that their local communities have little to offer them in terms of further education and training, employment options, recreation and leisure activities, and affordable and appropriate housing.
- Young rural people struggle with perceptions that a move to the city is the most successful option, whereas staying or returning to rural communities is seen as a failure.
- Lack of appropriate and affordable youth and singles accommodation.
- Perception of boredom among young people in many rural communities.

Recommendations

19 Youth Advisory Councils, now established with State Government support in some States, should be examined for national replication.

20 National and State support should be provided to local community and regional programs designed to make rural life more attractive to young people, and to address related lifestyle issues.

21 Recruitment campaigns should target young people who live in rural and remote areas for tertiary study and employment in the human services areas, especially education, health and recreation.

22 Building upon the interest of rural media (e.g. the ABC 'Outback Revival' day in Longreach and the Heywire Program), public and private support should be mobilised for a national positive rural media project, involving:

- Rural schools and TAFE colleges creating their own school/college student newspapers (print

and electronic) and networking these into a "Rural Australia Network".

- Inviting all networked newspapers and the Australian media to a national challenge that highlights what is attractive about living in rural areas, documents the current contribution of young people to rural development, and circulates youth ideas for more creative education, training and employment options in rural Australia.
- Encouraging private and public sectors to respond to the translation of the above youth ideas into action.
- Conducting a national campaign to highlight the past, current and potential contribution of rural young people to the social and economic development of Australia.
- Developing an information/media package, using government and industry funding, that challenges the negative images and perceptions of education, training and employment opportunities within rural communities.

37 Federal and State youth affairs departments should fund the development of resource materials and training packages aimed at workers with youth (paid and volunteer) in all tiers of government and non-government organisations on facilitation of youth participation in the "next step" processes following from consultation.

38 Specific state housing programs should be created to support and facilitate appropriate and affordable housing options for young people in rural areas.

5.5 Indigenous young people

Major issues include:

- Conflict between Indigenous culture and Western educational, training and employment systems and structures.
- Under-representation in all levels of education and training programs, with low retention and school completion rates, higher than average unemployment, poor numeracy and literacy skills, and a general lack of employment and career options.
- Shifts in employment and employing trends have effectively meant that traditional jobs are no longer available.
- Unease and unwillingness of young people to leave their communities for training.
- Prejudice and "artificial segregation" continue to exist.
- Education, training and employment further hampered by associated issues such as inadequate housing and transitional support; lack of telecommunication infrastructure and skills; poor health; intergenerational unemployment; and low schooling achievement.
- Importance of sport in the lives of many Indigenous young people, and its potential in building self-esteem and motivation.
- Lack of role models.

Recommendations

35 Methodologies of teaching and assessment should be reviewed, with the aim of highlighting techniques that are more in tune with the way students learn best and which reflect their unique cultural and language backgrounds. For example, pilot projects should be created that centre upon sport as a basis for building self-esteem and self-direction. The success of the New Zealand Maori Sports Academy approach should be explored for possible adaptation as an initiative.

36 Resources should be provided to enable training and "off-the-job" experiences to happen locally, and thus avoid the need to travel away.

37 More creative recruitment campaigns and equitable salary and remuneration packages should be developed to attract Indigenous young people to employment in the human service areas, especially education, health and recreation.

38 Examples and benefits of inter-agency initiatives that identify and support both young people at risk and those outside a support network should be highlighted.

39 Programs that promote role models beyond just "sporting heroes" should be further developed.

40 Bilingual education for Indigenous communities should continue to be supported where appropriate.

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Appendix 1

National, State and regional conferences and reports – attended, presented and referred to

Where possible, key themes and objectives of conferences and reports are noted.

Conferences

- Youth Affairs Conference, Pinjarra, WA. May, 1999.

- Positive Rural Futures, Biloela, Queensland. 28–30 May, 1998.

Purpose:

To provide a form for discussion of issues relating to the revitalisation and long-term survival of small rural communities.

Aims included:

enabling participants to establish contacts and sources of support in other communities;
providing a forum to share information, ideas and skills;
facilitating the development of action plans by local teams; and
helping participants to identify strategies to strengthen the economic base, social infrastructure and well-being of small communities.

- Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) Outback Revival Conference. Longreach, Qld. August, 1999.

- Isolated Children's Parents' Association Federal Conference, Katherine, NT. 4–5 August, 1999.

Key agenda issues:

Annual policy review and position development on issues related to:

- allowances (e.g. basic boarding component, second home allowance, Abstudy);
- boarding schools/school term hostels;
- communications (e.g. IT&T, postal services, satellite transmissions);
- distance education;
- post-secondary education;
- equity programs;
- curriculum; and
- small rural and remote schools.

- National Rural Communities Conference – Rural Communities Through Change, Coonabarabran, NSW. 27–28 September, 1999.

- Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia (SPERA) National Conference, Kalgoorlie, WA. October, 1999.

Australian Rural Summit, Canberra, ACT. October, 1999.

Four-fold objective:

- to develop a national appreciation of the challenges facing regional Australia;
- to gather ideas on how these challenges can be met;
- to establish a series of goals for regional Australia; and
- to identify the role that government, the corporate and community sectors should take in pursuing these goals.

Key themes to be explored at the summit included:

- communications;
- infrastructure;
- health;
- community well-being and lifestyle;
- government – local, State and Federal;
- finance and facilitating entrepreneurship;
- value adding to regional communities and farming industries;
- community and industry leadership
- education and training;
- philanthropy and partnerships; and
- sustainable resource management.

Community Economic Development Institute Conference, Boonah, Qld. November, 1999.

Reports

Haberkorn, G., Hugo, G., Fisher, M. & Aylward, R. 1999, Country Matters: Social Atlas of Rural and Regional Australia, Bureau of Rural Sciences, Canberra.

"This social atlas of rural and regional Australia contains maps illustrating a wide range of demographic, social and economic features characterising Australia's non-metropolitan population.

A decision was taken to focus on four broad themes to describe key social features pertaining to rural and regional Australia:

1. population and demography;
2. labour force and employment;
3. family income and income support; and
4. other social aspects and features relevant to life in rural and regional Australia such as education, health and housing, geographic isolation and regional socioeconomic disadvantage.

Apart from describing the most current state of affairs regarding a broad spectrum of important demographic and socioeconomic features – based largely on the 1996 census of population and housing – this atlas also illustrates recent key developments in these areas on the basis of comparing 1991 and 1996 data." (p.vii)

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1999, Bush Talks, HREOC.

Terms of reference

"The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity commission will inquire into the provision of education for children in rural and remote Australia with reference to:

- the availability and accessibility of both primary and secondary schooling;
- the quality of educational services, including technological support services; and
- whether the education available to children with disabilities, Indigenous children and children from diverse cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds complies with their human rights."

Department of Education 1999, Learning Lessons – An independent review of indigenous education in the Northern Territory, Department of Education, Darwin, NT.

Terms of reference:

"• The views and educational aspirations of indigenous parents and community members in relation to their children's schooling, with particular reference to English literacy and numeracy.
- The key issues affecting educational outcomes for indigenous children.
- Supportable actions for educational outcome improvements.

The review visited 25 per cent of all schools with significant numbers of indigenous students.

The review received 106 formal submissions, held public hearings in Darwin, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs, visited forty-four schools, conducted 126 interviews and attended forty forums with a wide range of interested individuals and organisations." (pp. ix,1)

Office of Youth Affairs 1999, Youth Voice Western Australia: A report of statewide consultations with young people, Office of Youth Affairs, WA.

"Workshops were held in 36 locations across the State in a major consultative program designed to identify the views of young people in regard to Government and community decision-making.

Goals of the consultative program were:

- to provide informed and quality advice to the Minister for Youth and advisory bodies to the Minister on youth issues for policy formation and coordination;
- to provide information to the Office of Youth Affairs for the development of an across Government youth strategy;
- to identify issues that are of priority to young people;
- to encourage interaction and understanding between young people and the wider community;
- to progress significant issues from the community and regional level to the State level;
- to identify unique aspects of living in a community, recognising that young people have different attitudes, experiences, strengths and needs;
- to raise the profile of young people; and
- to encourage more active involvement in appropriate Government and community forums." (p.7)

■ **Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee Report 1999, Jobs for the Future, AGPS, Canberra.**

Terms of reference

- An assessment of the factors contributing to the disparity in employment levels between different regions and also between regions and capital cities, as well as continuing high levels of regional unemployment, with particular reference to:
  - the impact of job opportunities as a consequence of increases or decreases in the level of Federal, State or local government funding and services;
  - the direct and indirect loss of income to regional communities;
  - its impact on the level of private sector investment and activity in regional communities;
  - the effectiveness of labour market programs and vocational education and training on job creation in regional areas; and
  - assessment of the effectiveness of current and previous governments' funding and program delivery in promoting regional job creation.
- An examination of remedial strategies that have or can contribute to reducing regional unemployment, including any overseas experiences.

■ **Stokes, H., Stafford, J. & Holdsworth, R. 1999, Survey into Rural and Remote Education, Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne.**

"The Terms of Reference for the Inquiry require that the Commission inquire into the provision of education for children in rural and remote areas with reference to:

- the availability and accessibility of both primary and secondary schooling;
- the quality of educational services, including technological support services;
- whether the education available to children with disabilities, indigenous children and children from diverse cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds complies with their human rights." (p.4)

Appendix 2

Consultation and case study proforma tool

Structured consultations with rural communities

National Youth Affairs Research Scheme

Creating better educational and employment opportunities for rural young people

Consultation tools – rural communities

Workshop (young people) format

1 Introduction of participants (ice breaker activities).

2 Introduction to the NYARS study and request for voluntary informed consent to participate.

3 Brainstorm: Issues facing young people in rural communities.

4 Brainstorm: What things would affect your decision to either continue living in a rural area or leave to the city?

5 Brainstorm: How do we improve opportunities in education and training for young people in this town?

6 Brainstorm: How do we improve opportunities in employment for young people in this town?

From 5 & 6, Ranking of proposals in order of priority (using dot method).

7 Exercise: Facsimile message to the Mayor – the group will be asked to prepare a joint communique (no more than 30 words, approximately) to the Mayor in the form of a facsimile letter describing what they believe should be done to improve education and employment opportunities for young women and men in town.

Workshop (teachers, parents and stakeholders) format

1 Introduction of participants (ice breaker activities).

2 Introduction to the NYARS study and request for voluntary informed consent to participate.

3 Brainstorm: Issues facing young people in rural communities.

4 Brainstorm: What things do you think would affect young peoples' decision to either continue living in a rural area or leave to the city?

5 Brainstorm: Identified gaps in education, training and employment programs, services or initiatives.

6 Brainstorm: How do we improve opportunities (proposals for addressing gaps and enhancing opportunities) in employment for young people in this town?

7 Ranking of Proposals for addressing gaps and enhancing opportunities in order of priority. (To include some discussions regarding the pre-conditions affecting the feasibility of proposed initiatives.) (Dot method)

Appendix 3

Consultation tool – State resource agency consultations

National Youth Affairs Research Scheme

Creating better educational and employment opportunities for rural young people

Study outline

The National Youth Affairs Research Scheme (NYARS) was established by the former Youth Ministers Council, now known as the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, in 1985. The scheme is a cooperative arrangement between the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments and seeks to contribute to the formation and assessment of youth policy and its implementation. Individual studies are commissioned by NYARS to give information on subjects not adequately covered by existing data sources and surveys.

In 1999, NYARS has commissioned the Centre for Social Research at Edith Cowan University, located in Perth, Western Australia, in cooperation with the consulting firm, IDEAS (Initiatives for the Development of Enterprising Action and Strategies, which incorporates the Centre for Small Town Development) to undertake a national study into the education and employment needs of young women and men in rural Australia. This study will explore and develop ways in which relevant education and training options and prospects can be generated for young people living in rural areas. It will also provide advice on the creation of appropriate employment opportunities. Specifically, this study will:

- document the ways in which recent Commonwealth reforms along with economic and social changes in rural communities have impacted upon young men and women and their education, training and employment opportunities;
- map existing relevant programs and identify service gaps for young people living in rural areas that contribute to their effective participation in education, employment and training;
- describe the adequacy of employment and career guidance and counselling services as they relate to education, training and employment opportunities in local rural economies;
- identify barriers to employment and relevant education and training opportunities for young people in rural communities as well as information regarding these opportunities;
- document likely growth industries applicable to rural Australia that are of relevance to young women and men;
- describe innovative models that can be developed to generate education and training options for young people in rural areas that are compatible with their employment opportunities;
- explore current and proposed use of information technology and multimedia in relation to education, training and employment prospects and opportunities; and
- describe approaches to enhancing of rural young people to the use of information technology that support education, training and employment outcomes.

Data will be collected through consultations with young people in rural areas, parents, teachers, community organisations, government policy-makers and program managers and youth development practitioners.

For further information contact:
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The IDEAS Group

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National Youth Affairs Research Scheme

Creating better educational and employment opportunities for rural young people

Consultation meeting

Thursday 30 September 1999, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Level 44, Grosvenor Place, 225 George St, Sydney

Proposed format

1 Introduction of participants (name, organisation representing, interest in subject).
2 Introduction to the NYARS study and request for voluntary informed consent to participate.
3 Brainstorm: Issues facing young people in rural communities.
4 Ranking of issues in order of priority.
5 Brainstorm: Key issues in eduction and employment.
6 Existing program responses to education and employment issues for rural young women and men. (To include comments of assessment on the impact of policy-making on young people, e.g. state allowances, accommodation subsidies.)
7 Identified gaps.
8 Proposals for addressing gaps and enhancing opportunities. (To include some discussions regarding the pre-conditions affecting the feasibility of proposed initiatives.)

National Youth Affairs Research Scheme

Creating better educational and employment opportunities for rural young people

Regional and statewide programs

Service mapping proforma

Name
(of program)

Brief description
(Just 2–3 sentences that summarise the program.)

Background
(Key events relating to the origins and development of the program.)

Objectives
(Summary of the stated purposes or aims of the program. Please include any written mission statement.)

Structure
(Please include legal structure, membership, management arrangements and staffing.)

Activities and achievements
(Please list major activities undertaken and any practical illustrations of performance.)

Funding
(Please provide current operational costs, with some indication of the sources of finance. Secondly, please indicate any developmental cost stages of the program.)

Outcomes achieved
(A description of the program's achievements, e.g. impact on rural young women and men in both qualitative and quantitative terms.)

Lessons
(Please list any key lessons you think are worth sharing with others who may be contemplating a similar initiative, including any problems experienced by the project.)

Point of contact
(Please indicate who readers can approach for further information. Include: name, title, organisation, address, telephone and facsimile.)

Appendix 4

Contact details for innovative programs

Case study no.	Name of program	Contact details
1	Youth Desk – Department of Industries and Business, Darwin, Northern Territory	(Business Services Department) GPO Box 160 DARWIN NT 0801 Ph: (08) 8999 5210 Fax: (08) 8999 7924 Web site: http://www.tbc.nt.gov.au
2	South West Strategy – Rural and Regional Strategy, Victorian Government	Copies of the Rural and Regional Strategy can be obtained from Information Victoria on: 1300 366 356 Web site: http://www.vic.gov.au/rrp/rrp.html
3	Initiatives of the Office of Youth Affairs, Western Australia: • Youth Advisory Councils • Cadets WA • Youth Consultation Strategy • Regional Youth Development Officers • Leadership College • WA Youth Awards Showcase	Office of Youth Affairs Albert Facey House 7th Floor, 469 Wellington Street PERTH WA 6000 Ph: (08) 9476 200 Fax: (08) 9322 6544 Web site: http://www.youthaffairs.wa.gov.au Web site (Youth Affairs Council): http://www.yacs.wa.gov.au
4	Leigh Creek Schools – the ANDU Project, Leigh Creek, South Australia	Leigh Creek Area School LEIGH CREEK, SOUTH AUSTRALIA Ph: (08) 8675 2062
5	Delatite–Vail Exchange Program, Delatite Shire, Victoria	Economic Development Branch PO Box 227 BENALLA VIC 3671 Ph: (03) 5760 2600 Fax: (03) 5762 5537 Email: delatite_shire@dsc.mav.asn.au

6	The Burnt Toast Cyber Cafe, The Salvation Army, Mornington Peninsula, Victoria	The Salvation Army Peninsula Youth and Family Services PO Box 1266 FRANKSTON VIC 3199 Ph: (03) 9783 4500 Fax: (03) 9783 8232
6	The Melton Youth Access Audit Project, Melton Council Youth Services, Melton, Victoria	Melton Council PO Box 21 MELTON VIC 3377 Ph: (03) 9747 7200 Fax: (03) 9743 9970
7	Youth Outreach Program, Jobs South West, Busselton, Western Australia	20 Spencer Street PO Box 998 BUNBURY WA 6230 Ph: (08) 9791 5075 / 9721 5033 Fax: (08) 9791 5076 / 9721 2269 Email: jobs_sw@highway1.com.au
8	Charters Towers Schools, Rural Industry School-based Apprenticeships, Queensland	Rural Industry Training Extension PO Box 366 CHARTERS TOWERS QLD 4820 Ph: (07) 4787 4933 Fax: (07) 4787 7970
9	Transition Teams, Wagga Wagga, New South Wales	Wagga Wagga Compact Suite 5, 66–70 Coleman Street WAGGA WAGGA NSW 2650 Ph: (02) 6925 7300 Fax: (02) 6925 0148 Email: compact@wagga.net.au
10	Aranui High School Sports Academy, New Zealand	Aranui High School CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND Ph: 64 3 388 7083 Fax: 64 3 388 7913 Web site: www.welcome.to/aranui.high.school

12	R.E.A.L. Enterprises, South Carolina, USA	REAL Enterprises Suite 320, 115 Market Street, DURHAM, NC, USA 27701-3221 Ph: 0011-1-919-688-7325 Fax: 0011-1-919-682-7621 Web site: www.realenterprises.org
13	School at the Centre, Nebraska, USA	PO Box 880355 LINCOLN, NEBRASKA, USA 68588-0355
14	The Community/School Revitalisation Program, Nebraska, USA	c/- Edwin Nelson Chadron State College PO Box 858 CHADRON, NEBRASKA, USA 69337 Ph: 0011-1-308-432-6259 Fax: 0011-1-308-432-6229 Email: enelson@cscl.csc.edu

Appendix 5

Summary of youth consultation issues and comments

Education

- Young people leaving their home towns for education, employment or training needs. Towns struggling to keep their young people.
- Lack of family supports if moving out for education and training. This often includes lack of financial supports.
- The need to move to a larger regional centre of further education due to the lack of options and subject choices. This is exacerbated by the lack of social and educational support for young people once they get to regional centres.
- Need to change perceptions of TAFE as a second-rate option for those who cannot get the grades to go to university. TAFE also need to offer a wider range of subjects in rural communities.
- The education system should address the need for more comprehensive and supportive tutoring for those students struggling academically. Such tutoring should not be dependent on what families can afford.
- The equipment and technology at schools need to improve.

Pathways from education to training and employment

- Need a better range of apprenticeships, including part-time and school-based apprenticeship programs.
- Need for schools to provide a wider range of pre-vocational courses through local resources and TAFE.
- Access to distance education could be better facilitated through satisfactory technology.
- Schools and TAFE need to look at better cooperation.
- Need for a vast improvement in course and career counselling.

Employment

- There are just not enough jobs, and what jobs there are, are boring and dead end.
- Need to eliminate discrimination against employing young people. Young people acknowledge that this was also a factor of social perceptions and beliefs about youth.
- Employers should provide realistic wages, given many young people are living independently of parents and receive no support from them.
- Frustration about how jobs are gained in small towns – through contacts and not via applications and interviews – it is who you know.
- The community needs to look at how to create and "form" jobs – including the local councils and businesses.

Social factors

- Problems of youth suicide, which can be very high in remote areas.
- Access by young people to a variety of services.
- Teenage pregnancy, exacerbated by lack of services. Often the only doctor is the family doctor and this creates issues about privacy.
- Lack of privacy and the high levels of gossip in small towns.
- Limited or no mental health facilities or other health facilities.
- Issues breed hopelessness.
- Limited support for marginalised young people, e.g. Indigenous, gay and lesbian, young people with disabilities, etc.
- Too many gaps for young people to fall through due to lack of social support services. Perception that there is little society or government response to the social issues affecting young people.
- Family dynamics:
  - changes in family employment and unemployment,
  - stereotype about alternative courses, and
  - gender stereotypes.

Image and perception

- Need to leave, because there is nothing here to stay for.
- Seen as a failure if I stay and if I return.
- Negative stereotype of young people held by adults and society in general.

Of the 80 young people consulted in Delatite Shire, Victoria, not one believed they would be living in the Shire in five years time. Three young people out of 20 from Bridgetown, WA, believed they would still be in the town in five years time; less than five per cent of all young people present at the youth consultations on the Eyre Peninsula, South Australia, believed they would be living and working in the community in 10 years time.

Lifestyle

- Social isolation and lack of social/recreation opportunities due to lack of transport options.
- Levels of substance abuse, and the pressure to be actively involved in substance use.
- Most of the social activities are for the 18 years and older group. There are few age-specific activities, except for sport and even these are based at licensed premises and around alcohol.

Transport

- Non-existent and/or inadequate.
- Expensive both financially and time wise.
- No car means no job and vice versa.
- Young unemployed people not eligible for travel discounts.
- High cost of fuel in rural regions.
- Government programs need to sort out travel reimbursement and insurance issues.
- New specific routes needed.

Participation in the community

- Struggle to involve young people in community planning.
- Young people are consulted all the time, but they have little knowledge about what happens to their suggestions. They rarely see anything of benefit coming out of these discussions.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

At the conclusion of consultations, young people were asked to draft a messages/facsimiles to their local mayor. The following are a collation of these messages:

We want more of a say.
We want to make a difference.
We want to be involved in decisions affecting young people and youth services.
We want more than just consultation – being part of making things happen is more important.

Appendix 6

Summary of State key stakeholder issues and comments

The following represents a collation of issues and comments made during the key stakeholder consultations held in Australian States and Territory.

Education

- Education is not leading to learning.
- Need to attract educators to regions.
- Few alternatives for post-compulsory training.
- Many P 10 schools throughout rural areas but few senior high schools.
- Some smaller rural centres do not have secondary schools, which creates a need to move to larger suburban areas for secondary education.
- Higher education – the need to move out of the community. Low percentage uptake of rural students into tertiary places. This seems to be more of a cost factor than cultural issue. Housing/rental costs are high. If living on campus there is subsidy from the tertiary institution.
- Fewer education and training opportunities further from the city, with fewer specialist support services.
- Need to recognise student diversity.
- School retention in rural areas is a significant concern given the high correlation between early school leavers and unemployment.
- Access to relevant education and training remains a major concern for many young people in rural communities.
- Lack of relevance leads to truancy and early school departure.
- Opportunities for education and training are often limited in rural areas.
- Need for more feedback to communities and learning from innovative experiences.
- Technology creates opportunities in local areas.
- Major problems for young people aged 15 to 16 years on remote/isolated communities. All communities have a primary school, few have secondary, therefore if a need/want to go on to secondary they can be provided with "post-primary studies" which in effect are primarily arts and sports delivered through the primary school. To get a proper secondary education there is a need to move out of community to regional centre.
- Communities employ teachers, with remote communities supporting the employment of teachers aide positions – training for Aboriginal peoples through Batchelor College (NT) – however few tend to complete the training. This can be due to a number of reasons including the need to leave their local communities to get the training and often the community cannot support or provide any more positions.

School and curriculum-based issues

- Significant numeracy and literacy problems.
- Limited opportunities and lack of breadth of opportunities in education and training options.
- Schools have limited choice of subjects, lack of speciality teachers with some centres only having one secondary or part secondary school.
- Different subjects being offered through correspondence.

- School guidance services are poor.
- While primary schools can be good, problems begin in the latter years of high school.
- Few positive role models.
- Inadequate resources for teachers.
- The Year 10 to Years 11 and 12 transitions need to be improved. While senior colleges can be a good experience they offer little support to rural young people who may never have left home before. Communities can take some role here.
- Need to shift and broaden attitudes and perspectives of further education.
- School and choice of HSC subjects limited.
- Broaden special entry criteria for university entrance.
- Rivalry between universities and TAFE.
- Need to realise that some young people will fit into neither mainstream nor correspondence-type school systems; however, NT supports no other alternatives. Christian Brothers/Catholic Ed (NT) is developing a proposal for supportive mentor-type education.
- Need to rationalise the counsellor:student ratio. Most schools have one counsellor regardless of the number of students, and some schools are having to combine counselling/teaching requirements for these positions to make them viable.

Pathways from education to training and employment

- Develop schemes to seed youth projects that are of regional benefit and target such schemes to young rural people.
- Fewer education and training opportunities further from the city, with fewer specialist support services.
- Access to relevant education and training remains a major concern for many young people in rural communities.
- Opportunities for education and training are often limited in rural areas.
- Need to encourage entrepreneurial training so that young people are better equipped to respond to change and pursue innovation. This can be achieved through a greater emphasis in school curriculum.
- Need to legitimise and encourage greater leadership training and development:
  - explore opportunities for linking the Youth Participation Charter and Strategy, Office of Youth Affairs to school curriculum and community projects for young people, and
  - important to engage young people that might not otherwise participate in such activities i.e. the "non-elite".
- In relation to VET programs a number of comments were made:
  - VET requires greater relevance,
  - restructuring necessary to improve access,
  - employee subsidies – there are gaps and inconsistencies, and
  - often not appropriate to small employers.
- Universities targeting education and training programs at rural young people.
- Relationship training, e.g. role models in general, and youth role models.
- Lack of information about employment and job opportunities.
- Training must be appropriate to local areas.

Employment

- Traditional employment options have changed.
- Changes in employment patterns and employer demands.
- Need for greater recognition to be given to local economy and employment initiatives within a more globalised economy.

- General lack of jobs in rural areas.
- Increase in "fly-in-fly-out" employment as well as "drive-in-drive-out" employment.
- Increase in poorly paid, casual labour (even in new industries such as tourism).
- Utilise labour market programs in the context of emerging issues, e.g. the environment and "green jobs".
- Employers unlikely to hire an unqualified and inexperienced young person.
- Tourism is the other big industry and predominates in the regional centres.
- Mines are the big industry for many of the rural/isolated areas and this typically dictates what young people take up in terms of education, e.g. apprenticeships in mines. This, however, has an impact on those young people (and indeed any other community members) wanting to undertake employment/training in other areas; there are a lack of opportunities for those not interested in the mining industry. A further disincentive is that miners typically earn more than other professionals which decreases the likelihood of young people taking on other initiatives.
- In smaller/rural areas jobs tend to go to those in the community who have some standing, responsibility, credibility within the community. Often those in employment move on to other employment options. Often not practical for communities to give these positions to young people without experience or standing in the community.

Issues for young Indigenous men and women

- Organised schooling not part of Aboriginal culture.
- The influence of city/urban culture on young rural people was not seen as a positive influence and seen to contaminate young Indigenous people particularly when returning to their communities. This was identified as an issue for the Aboriginal communities – hence the need to push for education to be taught in the local communities rather than having to send young people away.
- Curriculum and teaching methodology is irrelevant particularly to Aboriginal people.
- Previously there was a culture that expected movement out of area for education and then return to their local community, e.g. 30- to 50-year-olds tend to be predominantly literate with a solid education background. Culture doesn't encourage this today. The communities themselves do not seem to be encouraging young people to gain further education even to secondary level, they are not being supported to move out of the community to gain these standards. The feeling is that the community does not see the benefits in, or the opportunities to use, such education in the communities. Hence no incentive to learn. This culture was seen to be community rather than policy driven.
- Higher numbers of young people with numeracy and literacy deficits.
- In the Aboriginal culture, age of independence does not match white culture and policy. Aboriginal independence is bound up in a young person's initiation and this can occur at 15 years of age. Such discrepancies especially around monetary benefits (e.g. through Centrelink) therefore become an issue for Aboriginal communities and their young people.
- NT Government has undertaken a review of Aboriginal education (primary and secondary) and is looking at how to deliver these services more effectively and how to involve the communities in the delivering of such services.
- Aboriginal communities are looking at addressing the needs and issues of their local communities at a local level: appropriate schooling opportunities, development of skills and training to create the desire and initiatives for change. Need to develop working partnerships rather than imposed change and ideas.
- ESL (English as a Second Language) funding cut to Indigenous peoples with a move away from supporting native language tuition.
- Also some communities don't particularly want their young children to be educated in the Western system due to the influence of their own culture.
- Aboriginal communities see economic development as the key for community continuance.

Youth participation

Agreement that the exclusion of young people from planning, running and managing development services and programs was a problem for many young people in rural communities. Many young people were consulted (often too often) but rarely was there adequate follow-up to these consultations and the chance to participate more fully.

- Recognising youth participation and ownership.
- Involvement of young people in a meaningful way

Commentary of education, training and employment programs

There was agreement that the unique needs of rural and remote young people often require specifically designed programs and services. In some cases, State or nationwide programs can be effectively adapted to rural contexts, in other cases specialised programs are required. Currently, the urban bias of many programs discriminates against rural young people, e.g. the cost of rural-based vocational training is simply not covered by training funds at present.

Not all programs work equally well in all places. The extent of local support and management is a key factor in program success.

In all cases, programs should be socially and culturally relevant, especially when dealing with young people of Indigenous and Islander descent.

Program qualities were highlighted:

- Local contact person – local networks.
- Peer support and peer-driven programs.
- Getting young people into community with work experience.
- Strong involvement of local government.
- Locally controlled flexible funding allocations.
- A lot of sharing of skills and information with other projects across rural Australia.
- Positive youth participating principles.
- Coordinated use of funds.
- Community ownership of programs.
- Transparency in decision-making, especially in resource allocation.
- Greater emphasis on community capacity building.
- Communities solving problems and government acting as a facilitator rather than a provider.
- Tapping into potential found in diverse demography and cultures.
- Need for a "people perspective" in program delivery.
- Need to promote life skills, pre-preparation skills.
- Need to promote practical, hands-on, relevant programs.

Appendix 7

Principles that enhance youth participation

- Make it fun, challenging and exciting.
- Ensure participation by choice.
- Don't pigeonhole young men and women – be careful about generalising behaviour, opinions, attitudes or ideas.
- Set up for success – provide information, training, support, resources, time and space – especially support to promote success and handle setbacks.
- Involve experiences respected by young people, peers and the community.
- Create as many opportunities for young men and women to lead and teach.
- Always start with the gifts, talents, assets and skills of young people – never with their needs, problems or deficiencies.
- Maximise decision-making by young people and their accountability.
- Involve young men and women from the start.
- Generate experiences which address their issues and needs that are perceived as real and relevant by young women and men – avoid tokenism.
- Develop activities that raise young people's awareness of the social, political, economic, cultural and personal aspects of the issues affecting them.
- Make sense of, and de-mystify, adult structures and processes.
- Create opportunities for building active and supportive working relationships between young people and other members of the community.
- Identify activities that provide opportunities for training and skills development.
- Provide opportunities for young people to reflect and analyse their experiences.

Appendix 8

What is entrepreneurship? What should youth entrepreneurship education look like?

What is entrepreneurship?

While there are many definitions of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs, the following definition by Jeffrey Timmons of Babson University, USA, is consistent with our belief that entrepreneurship involves more than just "starting businesses":

> *Entrepreneurship is the ability to create and build something from practically nothing. It is initiating, doing, achieving and building an enterprise or organisation, rather than just watching, analysing, or describing one. It is the knack for sensing an opportunity where others see chaos, contradiction and confusion. It is the ability to build a "founding team" to complement your own skills and talents. It is the know-how to find, marshal and control resources (often owned by others) and to make sure you don't run out of money when you need it most. Finally, it is the willingness to take calculated risks, both personal and financial, and then do everything, and then do everything possible to get the odds in your favor.*

What should youth entrepreneurship education look like?

Effective youth entrepreneurship prepares young people to be responsible, enterprising individuals who become entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial thinkers and contribute to economic development and sustainable communities.

True entrepreneurship education provides opportunities for youth to master competencies related to core entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and attitudes, including:

- opportunity recognition
- idea generation and marshalling resources in the face of risk to pursue opportunities
- venture creation and operation
- creativity and critical thinking

Based on our experience, effective in-school or community-based youth entrepreneurship education should:

A. Encourage young people to be entrepreneurs, by:

- providing opportunities for youth to start and operate enterprises of appropriate size and scope, in which they are personally invested in a manner that is significant to them,
- reinforcing the concept that successful entrepreneurs take calculated risks based on sound research and relevant information, including economic analysis,
- requiring youth to develop a plan for a business that addresses its financial, marketing and operational aspects,
- portraying in a realistic way the relationship between risk and reward in the entrepreneurial process as it operates in the free enterprise system, and providing opportunities for young people to understand basic economic concepts such as savings, interest, supply and demand etc.,
- generating an understanding of a variety of industries, including, among others, finance, retail, service and technology.

B. *Encourage responsible enterprising behaviour by:*

- demonstrating entrepreneurship's place in the for-profit, not-for-profit, and public sectors, as part of school-to-career efforts, community service and overall economic development strategy,
- emphasising the need to operate enterprises and organisations in a legal, ethical, socially and environmentally responsible manner,
- involving adults from the surrounding community in addition to the primary instructor for the program. These adults may serve as mentors, advisors or role models for youth,
- utilising an action oriented curriculum that provides age appropriate experiential learning opportunities for which program leaders/instructors operate as coaches or facilitators. Wherever possible, youth should be responsible for leading their own inquiry based learning opportunities. Such student directed activities might include, but are not limited to: planning, creating and operating businesses, field trips, negotiation exercises and group problem-solving. These approaches may be used along with other teaching methods as appropriate, such as research, fact based learning, guest speakers and lecture.

C. *Operate accountably, by:*

- documenting, reflecting upon and evaluating the program's work in order to practice continuous improvement and measure its results and impact,
- seeking to include young people of all backgrounds,
- having measurable outcomes that provide value for the participants and community served,
- modelling responsible entrepreneurship by acting ethically as initiators and change agents within the institution or community.

(From the Youth Entrepreneurship Statement of Purpose and Criteria for Effective Practice adopted by leading youth entrepreneurship education programs, in USA)